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ASPECTS OF SPACE IN KAFKA AND BECKETT

by

© Margaret I. Davey

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled ASPECTS OF SPACE IN KAFKA AND BECKETT submitted by Margaret I. Davey in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The history of literature may be seen as the progressive exploration and definition of the protagonist-self. This study assumes the importance, in modern fiction, of an interdependent relationship between space and self-definition and it is in this context that the functional use of spatial imagery in selected works of Kafka and Beckett is studied.

In the first chapter, the apparent security of the small urban room (Kafka) and the space of the mind (Beckett) is shown to be illusory, so that the fundamental stability of the self and its space is questioned and the self is shown as victim of its own failures and illusions.

The second chapter is concerned with the interaction of the protagonist with the space of the 'Other' or non-self. Frequently a victim of the dark, claustrophobic spaces of the 'Other,' which threaten him with loss of space/self, Kafka's protagonist fears, yet seeks to define himself in terms of the 'Other.' In the urban, feature-filled spaces of the non-self, the protagonist experiences a sense of alienation. In Beckett's works, by contrast, the self either takes refuge in small spaces such as that of the mind or is found in relatively featureless rural landscapes, where it can withdraw from or even dominate the space of the 'Other.'

The third chapter deals with the instability of space resulting either from objective or subjective perception, and, incidentally,

with what Beckett calls the "breakdown of the object." In the consequent fluctuating space, the self resists consistent definition, and in the near-total spacelessness, long-sought by Beckett's protagonists, is found to be non-existent. In different ways, both Kafka and Beckett show that minimal spatial extension within well-defined limits is necessary if subject/object differentiation between self and its surroundings, is to be maintained.

One of the functions of the imagery of enclosed space, such as that of the room and cage, which the Kafkan and Beckettian characters respectively carry about with them, is to show the self as withdrawn, isolated, alienated and insecure, just as the reduced size of the insect's room in "The Metamorphosis" and the skull in Malone Dies is an aspect of the shrinking confidence and significance of the self. Similarly, the fluctuations, expansions and contractions of space, already noted as characteristic of some of Kafka's and Beckett's works, reflect the instability of the self. Thus, spatial imagery in Kafka and Beckett constitutes a graphic, structural means whereby the progressive, spiritual reduction and the instability of the self in contemporary fiction is illuminated; it also demonstrates, that, in the works of these writers, "Space is [indeed] pre-eminent and essential to selfhood."

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INDEX TO ABBREVIATIONS

Franz Kafka

"DS"	"Description of a Struggle," in *Franz Kafka: The Complete Works* (1971; rpt. New York: Schocken Books, 1976).
"B"	"Beschreibung eines Kampfes," in *Beschreibung eines Kampfes: Novellen, Skizzen, Aphorismen aus dem Nachlass* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946).
"WP"	"Wedding Preparations in the Country," in *Franz Kafka: The Complete Works*.
"H"	"Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande," in *Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande und andere Prosa aus dem Nachlass* (New York: Schocken Books, 1953).
"M"	"The Metamorphosis," in *Franz Kafka: The Complete Works*.
"V"	"Die Verwandlung," in Erzälungen und Kleine Prosa (New York: Schocken Books, 1946).
Man	*The Man Who Was Lost Sight Of, or America* (1938; rpt. London: Secker and Warburg, 1967). The abbreviation, *Man* is used here to differentiate the novel clearly from "M" ("The Metamorphosis").
Vsch.	*Der Verschollene*, or *Amerika: Roman* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946). *Vsch.* is used here to differentiate the novel clearly from "V" ("Die Verwandlung").
T	*The Trial*, Penguin Modern Classics (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1953).
P	*Der Prozess* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946).
C	*The Castle*, Penguin Modern Classics (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books in association with Martin Secker and Warburg, 1957).
S	*Das Schloss* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946).

INTRODUCTION

> Viendra le jour où [l'on] cessera de croire à la place privilégiée de l'homme sur la terre . . . où le jeu des valeurs humaines sera de nouveau déplacé . . . Ce jour-là les sociétés humaines se sentiront à l'étroit dans l'espace où les sociétés modernes s'étaient librement déplacées . . . A un monde nouveau, attaché à de nouvelles échelles d'appréciation et de valeur, il faudra un nouvel espace.
>
> Francastel[1]

This study assumes the importance of an interdependent relationship between space and self-definition in modern fiction, as implied by Frederick Hoffman's belief that, "Space is pre-eminent and essential to selfhood."[2]

According to Philip Solomon, "human existence is spatially structured; we think and act in terms of boundaries, enclosures, dimensions, and distances." There are two kinds of spaces: one is the 'objective' space of the scientist and the mathematician, depicted in measurements . . . maps, and equations"; the other is what Solomon terms 'living' space -- Matoré's "l'espace vécu" -- which:

> corresponds to a certain human reality and is described not by numbers but by the values accorded to its particular configurations by the individual located in fact or imagination within one of them. The security of a house; the oppressive confines of a small room in which the self is constricted and turned inwards; the limitlessness of sky or ocean into which the self can expand, these are but a few of the possible relationships between an individual and his spatial situation. The space in which an individual operates and his reaction to it, can therefore reveal a great deal about him.[3]

Even these aspects of space, however, are too limited to fully comprise Beckett's total view, which also includes, "the inner space of the protagonist, the space of his mind and his self . . ."[4] Selfhood, for many of Beckett's characters, "signifies a liberation from time and space, depicted as a transformation into a dimensionless point in the void."[5]

Both Kafka and Beckett seem to accept that the world of phenomena is a world of flux and degrees of uncertainty and honestly try to depict this spatially and in other ways in their fiction. Both concern themselves with experiences of space, and for different reasons, but for both, the essential quest is the search for the self. The apparent uncertainty in the outer world pervades all attempts to define and identify the self. In their concern to reflect the spatial incoherence of this world, Kafka and Beckett question the possibility of the existence of a consistent self in an inconstant world. The relationship between such a perception of external reality and the search for the self, may, however, be seen from an opposing point of view, as when Wilhelm Emrich says of Kafka and Beckett, "Bei beiden führt die Suche nach dem Selbst zur Zerstörung der empirischen Realität."[6]

Even the 'modern' literature of Proust, Joyce and Faulkner, as Durozoi suggests, has mostly followed the traditional novel in portraying man in control of a fixed, predictable and comfortably familiar spatial world.[7] Berenson's view of space-composition, as it originated in the art of the Renaissance, is much closer to such literature than to Kafka's or Beckett's:

> This art comes into existence only when we get a sense of space not as a void, as something merely negative, such as we customarily have, but on the contrary, as something very positive and definite, able to confirm our consciousness of being, to heighten our feeling of vitality. Space-composition is the art which humanizes the void, making of it, an enclosed Eden, a domed mansion wherein our higher selves find at last an abode, not only as comforting, as measured to our everyday needs . . . but as transporting, as exciting as are those things only which build up the ideal life . . . here there is more freedom, less is determined for one, though nothing is left to wayward fancy, and here . . . many . . . instruments are playing to woo us away from our tight, painfully limited selves . . .[8] (my italics)

This comforting view of man in relation to his universe is only possible when he feels himself to be of importance in his world and in control of it. As Pierre Francastel has said, the basis for the fifteenth century representation of space rests on the conception of man as, "acteur efficace sur la scène du monde . . . se sentant un personnage nécessaire au développement harmonieux de la vie sur la planète . . ."[9]

In Durozoi's view, most literature is based on a similar view of man in relation to his universe:

> La littérature se batit ordinairement à partir d'une parfaite domination de l'espace: le lieu dans lequel l'action doit se dérouler est dès le départ décrit. Il est l'espace à l'intérieur duquel les gestes, les pensées des personnages pourront se déployer et trouver un appui. Chez Balzac aussi bien que chez Proust, Joyce ou Faulkner, le voyage est toujours précis: on se rend d'un endroit bien repéré à un autre également identifié par un nom. Cette humanisation de l'espace peut s'opérer de manières différentes . . . mais toujours elle aboutit à une relation entre le personnage et son décor. Il y a ainsi une domination de l'homme sur l'espace, qui garantit l'authenticité du récit par référence à l'expérience quotidienne du lecteur.[10]

In the works of both Kafka and Beckett, their own radical doubts concerning, for instance, the existence of God in Beckett's case, man's place in the universe, the possibility of knowledge, or self-knowledge, the rôle of perception and literature in the search for truth, and the possibility of understanding and communicating with one's fellow-man, result in a much more ambiguous depiction of empirical space. Far from dominating this space, man is either lost in, and alienated by it, or indifferent to it; "correspondingly reduced and demeaned,"[11] in Hoffman's words, the self is enclosed mainly in small rooms, or has withdrawn from exterior space into underground rooms, cells or the space of the mind itself. There is nothing comforting in the spaces which Kafka's and Beckett's characters occupy, for both authors are concerned, not to reassure, nor to conceal the true nature of existence, but, in their different ways, to simulate the existential 'process' with its monotonous, but persistent strangeness, and its element of cruelty and apparent meaninglessness. In the works of Kafka and Beckett, the space of empirical reality mainly lacks the familiar signpost of name and place mentioned by Durozoi, yet remains at once recognizable and strange. Whereas, in Kafka, this strangeness persists in spite of a background of apparently normal urban life, in Beckett, it mostly exists as the result of a backdrop of featureless, rural wasteland:

> L'expérience spatiale du personnage beckettian s'effectue sous le signe contraire [aux écrivains comme Proust, Joyce et Faulkner] de l'étrangeté; aucun sens, aucun repère ne sont possibles, qu'ils soient naturels (reconnaissance et distinction des paysages) ou humains (noms des lieux et des villes). Tous les décors ruraux sont semblables, constitués par la combination de quelques souvenirs d'Irlande, tous les décors urbains sont invivables.[12]

Light is a very important element of spatial perception and plays a significant rôle in the works of both Kafka and Beckett, but their use of it does not necessarily conform to the dichotomy we have come to associate with literature and the traditional novel, in which light is associated with good, the spirit, harmony and knowledge, and darkness with their opposites. Kafka makes a selective, and often symbolic use of light -- the Statue of Liberty in The Man Who Was Lost Sight Of, or America, holds a sword, not a torch -- a dim light and a stuffy atmosphere usually denotes the presence of the court and/or its representatives, while darkness may imply a form of perceptual blindness in the perceiver. As James Knowlson has shown, Beckett makes a very subtle use of light, equating lightness, darkness and half-light, with white, black and an intermediate tone of grey. These lights and tones, together with images of vision and blindness, play an important, if ambiguous, structural and thematic rôle in his works.[13] Solomon notes that Beckett reverses the normal values attached to light and dark, while also making use of their usual connotations, specifically using the opposition between the two in an unexpected way, "to contrast inauthentic and authentic existence, macrocosm and microcosm, fiction and self."[14] This accounts, for instance, for the way in which Beckett occasionally uses sunlight to draw particular attention to the world of exterior reality and normal social life, and for the otherwise inexplicable fascination that darkness has for most of the protagonists in search of self. In both Kafka and Beckett, these more symbolic uses of light, like the lack of names and recognizable locations, also tend to have the effect of blurring the normal qualities of the space of empirical reality, so adding to the 'strangeness' of their respective landscapes. The way in which light normally falls on objects in space directly affects our perception of space. While the symbolic use of light interferes with this process, it gains more significance when used in the context of an ostensibly objective, euclidean description of space. In the works of both Kafka and Beckett, though in different degrees, euclidean space, with its natural fall of light -- the 'objective' space of the mathematician, as Solomon terms it -- reflects the objective world of external reality, and whether implicitly or explicitly, has a definite function as the point of departure for the protagonist/self.

When Solomon distinguishes between 'objective' and 'living' space, he is, in fact, drawing a distinction between objective and subjective views of space, between the exterior, euclidean world of objects in stable relationship to one another that we habitually see daily, and the personal, 'lived' space, which is part of the former, but to which we also react emotionally, giving it subjective, personal value. Thus, 'objective' euclidean space can be said to be continuous and on-going, whether or not it is perceived from one moment to the next. It represents, in Piaget's words, "a universe both stable and external, relatively distinct from the internal world and one in which the subject places himself as one particular term among all the other terms."[15]

Quite apart from the variety of possible descriptions of 'l'espace vécu', with its subjective viewpoint, 'objective,' euclidean space can be portrayed in more than one way: through euclidean or, what Piaget terms, topological spatial description, or, with the added effects of light and movement, which tend to break up existing shapes, in an impressionistic, but still objective way. A euclidean description of such space would indicate the relationships between one object and another -- Kafka's, "on the right behind my plate the newspaper, on the left the lamp" -- is an example, possibly going as far as trying to indicate the precise relationship of size and distance. Such description has been commonly used to create the effect of realism in literature, as in the nineteenth century-type novel, which, according to Rubin Rabinovitz, had its origins in the nineteenth century positivistic view of time and space:

> Given the apparent solidity and permanence of space-time reality, it seemed necessary for novelists to inject large doses of this reality into their writing . . . A 'realistic' work was one which had close links with the world of time and space as opposed to imaginary works which seemed unreal.[16]

In this context, it is interesting that, in his study of space in the eighteenth century novel, Jean Weisgerber found, "si peu de points de contact avec la géometrie euclidienne."[17] Kafka, however, sometimes uses a modified type of euclidean space description when he wants to draw attention to the 'work-world' characteristics of a particular space or person, and similarly, Beckett uses it to refer to what he sees as the inauthentic empirical world of reality, as opposed to the authentic world of the self.

Piaget has pointed out that the complicated systems involved in the perception of euclidean space are not fully developed in children until they reach the age of 8 or 9, and that until then they are "forced to reconstruct space in terms of the most primitive notions such as the topological relationships of proximity, separation, order, enclosure, etc."[18] -- that is without reference to the relationship of one object to another. Kafka uses topological spatial description rather more frequently than euclidean, but, as with his symbolic use of light, the choice seems to be dependent on the particular function of space he has in mind, and is not an arbitrary one. While Kimberly Sparks maintains that Kafka's spatial descriptions are predominantly topological or primitive, he seems to imply that this, in combination with "the constant confusion of bedrooms, sickrooms, nurseries and cells," denotes an overwhelming and exclusive desire to 'return to the womb.'[19] While the latter may partially account for Kafka's seeming preference for small spaces, it fails to take into consideration, for instance, Kafka's use of euclidean space, and, as Gesine Frey has indicated, the way in which space in his work is often subordinated to the demands of poetic rather than narrative logic.[20]

The work of the Impressionists showed clearly how light and movement can destroy the normal, objective view of euclidean space, breaking up the clear outlines of objects, and destroying the distinct spearation of object and field, often substituting apparently meaningless patterns of shape and colour over the entire visual field. In so far as they were realists, the Impressionists objectively recorded this process, trying not to impose meaning on what they saw. On occasion, both Kafka and Beckett, in different ways, make use of a comparable way of seeing, but in their case, and particularly for Beckett, it is used to indicate the failure of perception and language to provide reliable knowledge of the world and the self.

While objective perception of the exterior world may continue to reflect its apparent stability and reality, or conversely, its seeming destruction by light and movement, subjective perception can reveal a quite different reality, which, in accordance with Solomon's 'living' space, has far more meaning for the protagonist, and for him, may be the only reality. In Kafka, subjective perception leads to distortions of size, which seem to deny the stable relationships of objects in euclidean space, and to diminution of the inauthentic self, finally leading, particularly in The Trial and The Castle, to the total loss of its space.

From the time of Murphy, Beckett's first published novel, it is evident that, for Beckett, the exterior, empirical space of reality, is of secondary importance to the space of the mind. Murphy, like the protagonists of the trilogy, Molloy, Malone and the Unnamable, believes that his true self is to be found in his mind, and for this reason, he withdraws into it whenever possible. The protagonists of the trilogy, beginning with Molloy, carry this process to its logical conclusion in The Unnamable, by gradually casting off their decaying, physical bodies in the natural process of entropy, hoping to find the essential, authentic self as an almost dimensionless speck in the spacelessness of the void. It is important to realise that Beckett's conception of the spaceless and timeless self accords with the dualist philosophy of Descartes, whose questioning of all sources of human knowledge and doubts concerning external reality, as Federman points out, could not fail to attract Beckett.[21] Descartes believed that the mind is separated from the body, which he saw as a "perfect man-machine," created by God. In his dictum, "I think, therefore I am," Descartes expressed his belief that the essential self lay in the mind, not in the body, whose sensory experiences must therefore be deceptive and could be ignored. According to this view, essentially shared by Beckett, the mind is conceived of as pure spirit, while the body, as mere container of the mind, and subject to decay and mutilation, is thought of as part of the crass material world, possessing like it, the "qualities of extension, quantity and movement."[22] Descartes tried to effect some reconciliation between mind and body, rather vaguely crediting a "vital will," situated in the pineal gland with making a connection between them. According to Federman, on this matter, Beckett preferred the ideas of the Belgian Occasionalist, Geulincx, who believed that since any connection between mind and body was miraculously effected by God, there was no point in trying to understand the actions of the body and it could therefore be ignored.[23] As David Hesla has said, however, "Descartes' bifurcation of substance into mind and matter -- unextended thinking substance and extended, unthinking substance -- is one of the fundamental polarities that pervades all of . . . [Beckett's] work."[24] The almost spaceless Unnamable in his "purgatorial internal landscape" of crepuscular light, situated at the vanishing point of a three-dimensional spiral, is the logical outcome of these combined views of the insignificance of the body. The Unnamable's search for self, which accompanies his spatial reduction, also owes much to Beckett's belief, formulated in *Proust*, that the artist should seek the self through contraction into himself, "negatively shrinking from the nullity of extra-circumferential phenomena,"[25] a process begun in *Murphy*, and progressively carried on by the writer-protagonists of the trilogy.

While Kafka, in his earliest published work, "Description of a Struggle," affirmed the necessity of space for the existence of the self, and showed in *The Castle*, how, lacking space, the self is forced to try to arrogate it for itself, Beckett reaches an impasse in

The Unnamable, for the latter also realises he cannot exist as self without a minimum of space. Although the spatial imagery of Kafka and Beckett is at first suggestive of Bachelard's "l'espace intime," the works, particularly those of Kafka, become progressively concerned with hostile space, based mainly on a simple binary opposition of interior/exterior space recalling the dialectic of Matoré, and more recently, Weisberger. Such binary terms, however, are not adequate to embrace the total complexity of the spatial imagery in Kafka and Beckett. This study, therefore, while in part based on an interior/exterior polarity, goes beyond it; it attempts to trace a line from the "shrinking space" of the self in a number of key works of Kafka and Beckett, as it moves from the apparent security of the personal enclosed space of small rooms or the space of the mind, through the interior and exterior spaces of the 'Other' or non-self, to the reality of the unstable space of subjective perception, which itself threatens the very existence of the self.

Notes to the Introduction

[1] Pierre Francastel, *Peinture et Société: Naissance et Destruction d'un Espace Plastique de la Renaissance au Cubisme* (Lyon: Audin Editeur, 1951), pp. 104-5.

[2] Frederick J. Hoffman, *Samuel Beckett: The Language of Self* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), p. 50.

[3] Philip H. Solomon, *The Life After Birth: Imagery in Samuel Beckett's Trilogy*, Romance Monographs, No. 15 (University, Mississippi: Romance Monographs, 1975), p. 21.

[4] Solomon, p. 22.

[5] Solomon, p. 23.

[6] Letter received from Wilhelm Emrich, 15 June 1980.

[7] Gérard Durozoi, *Beckett*, Présence Littéraire, Collection dirigée par Georges Décote (Paris-Montréal: Bordas, 1972), pp. 164-5.

[8] Bernard Berenson, *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (London: The Phaidon Press, 1952), pp. 120-1.

[9] Francastel, p. 104.

[10] Durozoi, pp. 164-5.

[11] Hoffman, p. 43.

[12] Durozoi, p. 165.

[13] James Knowlson, *Light and Darkness in the Theatre of Samuel Beckett*, Text of a public lecture delivered at Trinity College, Dublin, 7 Feb. 1972 (London: Turret Books, 1972), p. 12.

[14] Solomon, p. 94.

[15] Jean Piaget, *The Child's Construction of Reality*, trans. Margaret Cook (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 3.

[16] Rubin Rabinovitz, "Time, Space, and Verisimilitude," *Journal of Beckett Studies*, No. 2 (Summer 1977), p. 43.

[17] Jean Weisgerber, *L'Espace Romanesque*, Bibliothèque de Littérature Comparée (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1978), p. 19.

[18] Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *The Child's Conception of Space*, trans. F. J. Langdon and J. L. Lunzer (1956; rpt. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 4.

[19] Kimberly Sparks, "Radicalization of Space in Kafka's Stories," in *On Kafka: Semi-Centenary Perspectives*, ed. Franz Luna (London: Elek Books, 1976), p. 117.

[20] Gesine Frey, *Der Raum und die Figuren in Franz Kafka's Roman,* "Der Prozess" (Marburg: Elwert, 1969), pp. 182-4.

[21] Raymond Federman, *Journey to Chaos: Samuel Beckett's Early Fiction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1965), p. 74.

[22] Solomon, p. 61.

[23] Federman, pp. 77-8.

[24] David H. Hesla, *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minneapolis: The Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 16.

[25] Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (1931; rpt. London: John Calder, 1976), p. 65.

CHAPTER ONE

Personal Enclosed Space

> Everyone carries a room about inside him.
>
> Kafka[1]

> . . . and when I moved from place to place, it was very slowly, as in a cage.
>
> Molloy[2]

Hoffman suggests that, "One of the most important observations of the modern view of self concerns its move toward reduction and limitation," which is closely related to the "disappearance of self-confidence" -- to its sense of lost value.[3] In the works of Kafka and Beckett, this is often reflected in the form of their stories -- in the "pattern of dissolution of the main character" -- in which the dominant structure, as Szanto says, is that of the unsuccessful, incompleted quest.[4] In the face of metaphysical and epistemological uncertainties, which are partly responsible for its own self-doubt, the self nevertheless tries to maintain and preserve its identity.[5] The Kafka protagonist mainly seeks security and certainty behind closed doors, and in the routine of work, while the Beckett writer-hero hopes to discover his essential self by withdrawing into the space of the mind, since, as Beckett wrote in Proust, "The only fertile research is excavatory, immersive, a contraction of the spirit, a descent."[6]

In Kafka's and Beckett's writings, this reduction of man's significance is marked by his withdrawal into ever smaller areas of space, and particularly in Kafka, by feelings of alienation in exterior space. Kafka's protagonists live mainly in an urban world of small, furnished bed-sitting rooms -- Gesine Frey notes the double focus on private room and office in The Trial — while Beckett's novels and plays usually "describe a small space occupied by dimly seen or realized objects, or stretches of waste spaces whose very monotony offers the very same impression.[7]

Kafka's small urban room is looked upon as a refuge. This is evident even in "Description of a Struggle" ("Beschreibung eines Kampfes," 1904-5), Kafka's earliest published work, where the narrator mentions two rooms, neither of which he actually enters in the course of the story. The first is the narrator's own room to which he anticipates returning, while on a disagreeable walk with the acquaintance:

> On reaching my room I'll feel warm, I'll light the lamp in its iron stand on my table, and when I've done that I'll lie back in my armchair which stands on the Oriental carpet . . . The lamp will shine on my chest as I lie in the armchair. Then I'll cool off and spend hours alone between the painted walls and the floor which, reflected in the gilt-framed mirror hanging on the rear wall, appears slanted.[8]

The second, which is mentioned in the last section of the story, is an imagined room, in which the narrator sits unwillingly with the acquaintance:

> As though our sorrow had darkened everything, we sat high up in the mountain as in a small room . . . We sat close together in spite of not liking one another at all, but we couldn't move apart because the walls were firmly drawn.
>
> ("DS" p. 50/"B" pp. 64-65)

The former is unique among Kafka's personal rooms for its colour and warmth, as well as its lack of a bed or sofa. The selection of items to be mentioned gives the description something of the quality of a 'collage' -- a compilation of disparate elements with limited local relationship. According to Piaget's terminology, it is predominantly a primitive, topological, rather than a euclidean description of space, which, above all, conveys the narrator's youthful appreciation of its comfort, warmth and security, its quality of 'lived' space. The unusual viewpoint introduced in the strange perspective of the slanting floor reflected in the mirror, is one of a number of sudden changes of perspective to be found in subsequent works, and anticipates the Impressionistic perception of "Wedding Preparations in the Country." The 'imagined' room is one of many in Kafka's works, like the room which he says everyone carries about inside him,[9] and the room Edouard Raban creates in the darkness in "Wedding Preparations in the Country" ("Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande", 1907-8), in which, "The trapeze-shaped flame between conjoined sheets of glass burned in this tower-like wide darkness as in a little room, letting darkness assert itself a few steps farther on."[10] The frequency with which these images occur suggests an almost obsessive need to create small areas of refuge in space. As will be seen, the cage and jar imagery used by Beckett suggests a similar need.

In Kafka's world of small, urban rooms it is the bedroom as apparent refuge associated with certainty and security, which has particular significance. The bedroom seen as sanctuary is nowhere more evident than in Kafka's "Wedding Preparations in the Country." Even in this story, however, the bedroom does not yet function as the major locus for the main action as it will in "The Metamorphosis" and The Trial, but, like the narrator's room in "Description of a Struggle," comes to Raban's mind as a possible and desirable place of retreat. Raban imagines himself lying dreaming in bed, covered with a yellow-brown blanket, and assuming "the shape of a big beetle, a stag beetle, or a cockchafer, I think", as he used to as a child, when in difficulty. ("WP" p. 56/ "H" p. 12) Clues to the layout of the room are few. The window is evidently open to the breeze, and the clothed body, which must go to the country, is imagined as staggering out of the door and "stumbling on the stairs." Only the bed as focus of the main action has any importance in the room. A quite different room is envisaged by Raban when travelling by bus in the wet countryside:

> Oh beautiful city and beautiful the way home . . . the city is far from here, but there I get the meal expected for that evening, set on the table, on the right behind my plate, the newspaper, on the left the lamp.
>
> ("WP" p. 71/"H" p. 32)

Here the precise euclidean description, though slight, conveys the sense of certainty and security which Raban derives from the routine of his everyday life.

The bed-sitting rooms of the two protagonists in "The Metamorphosis" and The Trial are very similar, although the former is part of a family apartment, while the latter is rented. Both rooms have a bed, window and desk, the relationships of which are not specified. Gregor Samsa's room in "The Metamorphosis" ("Die Verwandlung", 1912), is the more personal room -- Joseph K.'s in The Trial is cold and anonymous -- for it is fitted with old family furniture and has a picture of a girl in a fur muff, cut from a magazine, on the wall. Though neither is described in detail, the desks in the two rooms differ. Samsa's has familiar associations going back to his primary school days, while Joseph K.'s has none, but in keeping with his job as bank assessor, the drawer of his desk is meticulously tidy.[11] Both rooms lack privacy; Gregor Samsa's room in "The Metamorphosis" has four doors, one on each side, one of them a double door leading to the family living-room, while Joseph K.'s in The Trial has two, one leading to his landlady's room and the other to the common entrance hall. These doors act, both empirically and symbolically, as indications that the room in which the self believes itself most secure is open to all-comers. While Samsa's window increasingly acts as his only connection with the outer world, Joseph K.'s, as Gesine Frey points out, becomes another means whereby the outer world obtrudes into his private life.[12] Although the description of these rooms is mainly topological, the element of euclidean description, which emphasizes their interconnecting relationship with other rooms, is more significant. The imminence of the ordered, empirical world and Gregor Samsa's own involvement in it, is indicated in the euclidean description Gregor-as-insect gives of his family's apartment in "The Metamorphosis":

> The breakfast dishes were set out on the table lavishly . . . Right opposite Gregor on the wall hung a photograph of himself in military service, as a lieutenant, hand on sword, a carefree smile on his face, inviting one to respect his uniform and military bearing. The door leading to the hall was open, and one could see that the front door stood open too, showing the landing beyond and the beginning of the stairs going down.[13]

The office, which is often the other point of focus in Kafka's work, as in The Trial, can represent an extension of the protagonist's personal space, or, as indirectly in "The Metamorphosis," and to some extent in The Trial, an intrusion of the office into his personal life. In "The Metamorphosis," the chief clerk's investigation of Samsa's lateness is an example of the latter, but, in Frey's view, Joseph K.'s obsessively tidy desk-drawer also represents the intrusion of the office world into his life.[14] Conversely, in The Trial (Der Prozess, begun 1914), K. feels particularly secure in his office and refers proudly to its orderliness and stability when talking to his landlady on the morning of his 'arrest' in his bedroom:

> In the Bank, for instance, I am always prepared, nothing of that kind could possibly happen to me there, I have my own attendant, the general telephone and the office telephone stand before me on my desk, people keep coming in to see me . . .[15]

Even K.'s office, however, is not self-contained; it has a door leading to the Deputy Manager's office, through which access is obtained to the Manager's office, and another to the client's waiting-room. Furthermore, it is in the corridor, leading from his office to the main staircase, that he unexpectedly finds the Whipper in the lumber room.

Although the Kafka protagonist usually feels most certain of himself in his own bedroom, it is precisely here that he is caught unawares and made conscious of his sudden separation from his accustomed environment. This moment of "awakening," as Szanto terms it, occurs in the morning after waking, and usually happens as the result of the failure of the protagonist to be true to himself and others; it marks the beginning of the unsuccessful quest, characteristic of Kafka's (and

Beckett's) works.[16] There is a certain irony in the moment of 'awakening' taking place in the bedroom. Like Edouard Raban in "Wedding Preparations in the Country" (hereafter cited as "Wedding"), Gregor Samsa, in "The Metamorphosis," with all his doors locked from the inside, and Joseph K. in The Trial, Kafka himself thought of his bed as a secure place for dreaming and reflection. Thus he wrote to Felice Bauer, later his fiancée (October 27, 1912), saying that he had "spent . . . half the day in bed, the best place for sadness and reflection,"[17] and later (December 22-3, 1912), that he had woken at 2, "but still under the influence of sleep and therefore with uninterrupted and magical visions."[18]

Significantly, it is in the bedrooms which have a number of doors, such as those in "The Metamorphosis" and The Trial, that the self proves to be in greatest danger. Gesine Frey, referring to The Trial, says that it is through doors (and windows) that unrest enters, "von draußen aus einem Raum . . . und was sie bringen, sind Unruhe und Fragen."[19] Kafka himself constantly bewailed the fact that as a bachelor he would always live in small rooms and never have a front door of his own:

> It seems so dreadful to be a bachelor . . . having to say goodnight at the front door, never being able to run up a stairway beside one's wife . . . to have only side doors in one's room leading into other people's living rooms . . . He moves incessantly, but with predictable regularity, from one apartment to another. The farther he moves from the living . . . so much the smaller a space is considered sufficient for him . . .[20]

The 'rebirth' at the beginning of "The Metamorphosis" obviously has its origins in the self; no one has entered through the doors, as in The Trial, because Samsa keeps them locked from the inside. When he wakes to find himself a huge beetle, his bedroom has ceased overnight to be the comforting place it once was, and what was a game of pretence for Raban in "Wedding" becomes a frightening reality for Samsa. Formerly the centre of his personal life, the bedroom now becomes the means whereby the failure of the self, both personal and vis à vis the family, is made concretely evident. Gregor Samsa's incongruous attempts to follow his normal routine, in spite of his metamorphosis, represent an indictment of the way he has allowed his public 'work-self' to penetrate his private life to an unnatural and harmful degree. Thus the insect told himself that, "The next train went at seven o'clock, to catch that he would need to hurry like mad and his samples weren't even packed up . . . ("M" p. 91/ "V" p. 71). Subsequently, in spite of his repulsive appearance and inhuman voice, he pleads for his job with the chief clerk, citing his previous loyalty to the firm. In The Trial, on the other hand, although Frey maintains that the warders involved in Joseph K.'s arrest are objectivations of aspects of his inner self,[21] one of the warders enters the door of his bedroom, and both, as Sussman points out, intrude on his privacy to the extent that they, "appropriate K.'s breakfast and underwear, dictate what he wears, deny him any contact with his landlady, and penetrate such previously restricted spaces as Frl. Burstner's room."[22] The previously secure space of K.'s official self is also invaded by the court, as evidenced by the presence of the Whipper and the two warders in the lumber room of the bank corridor.

In undermining his protagonists' illusory sense of security in the places where they believed themselves to be least vulnerable, Kafka makes clear his belief that the comfortable routines and responses gradually developed at home and at work, are inimical to the growth of the true self. Routine, like Beckett's view of 'Habit', acts like a screen "to spare its victim the spectacle of reality,"[23] Although Kafka believed the world should have its due, in over-adapting to the wishes of others, as Samsa in "The Metamorphosis" does, and in failing like Joseph K. in The Trial, to think and act independently, yet unselfishly, Kafka believed that man becomes alienated from his true self and from others. The insect which Samsa becomes is a false, alien self, and as in the case of Joseph K., there is no place for it in life. The inauthentic self 'exists,' Kafka seems to imply, only in the form of endlessly duplicated and lifeless office clerks, such as the three identical lodgers in "The Metamorphosis" and the three banks clerks in The Trial. Both implicitly and explicitly, in his letters, diaries and fictional works, Kafka continually criticized office and work life as destructive of the true self. Emrich refers to Kafka's early novel, The Man Who Was Lost Sight Of, or America (Der Verschollene, or Amerika, 1911-14), as "one of the most clear-sighted poetic exposures of modern industrial society that exist in world literature."[24] In his depiction of a modern telegraphist at work, for instance, Kafka emphasizes how that society dehumanizes man -- the fingers of the operator in The Man Who Was Lost Sight Of, "kept twitching with inhuman regularity and speed."[25] In his diary of 1911, Kafka wrote of himself, "Outwardly, I fulfill my duties satisfactorily in the office, but every unfulfilled inner duty becomes a misfortune that never leaves."[26]

Kafka, it could be said, denies refuge, or personal space, to the *inauthentic* self, and in *The Man Who Was Lost Sight Of* (hereafter cited as *The Man*), implies, by the virtual disappearance of the stoker, and the young protagonist, that there is no place for the authentic and young, innocent self either, at least in industrial society. In *The Castle* (*Das Schloss*, 1922), although K. is the first Kafka protagonist to fight "to obtain a concrete phenomenal existence . . ."[27] which is not naturally his, neither the village nor the Castle are of this world, for K. cannot breathe in the air of the village streets leading to the Castle, and can never reach the Castle. Similarly, in Kafka's late work, "The Burrow" ("Der Bau," 1923), while the protagonist lives in his own house, which he has built himself, his 'house,' is the underground burrow of an animal, who lives in fear that his burrow, the space of his self, will be attacked either from inside or out. As shown in "The Metamorphosis" and *The Trial*, however, the Kafka self, imprisoned in its accustomed environment of rented rooms and offices, is mostly fated to become the victim of its own illusions and weaknesses, or, as is particularly true of *The Man*, the victim of society.

Beckett's early descriptions of enclosed, personal space are far more particularized, comprehensive and nearly euclidean than Kafka's -- says the Unnamable, "if I could only describe this place, I who am so good at describing places . . ."[28] Thus in *More Pricks Than Kicks*, 1934, a collection of short stories, Beckett describes Belacqua preparing his toast, in almost loving detail:

> He deployed an old Herald and smoothed it out on the table. The rather handsome face of McCabe the assassin stared up at him. Then he lit the gas-ring and unhooked the square flat toaster, asbestos grill, from its nail and set it precisely on the flame. He found he had to lower the flame . . . Now the long barrel-loaf came out of its biscuit-tin and had its end evened off on the face of McCabe . . .[29]

Similarly, the clutter of furniture in the large bed-sitting room that Celia finds for herself and Murphy is depicted in some detail, if only in the interests of parodying the realism of the traditional novel:

> The room was large and the few articles of furniture it contained were large. The bed, the gas cooker, the table and the solitary tallboy, all were very large indeed . . . Murphy's rocking-chair trembled by the hearth, facing the window. The vast floor area was a dim geometry of blue, grey and brown . . . The walls were distempered a vivid lemon . . .[30]

As Beckett's work evolves, this particularized spatial description gives way to a more abstract geometrical one, but Beckett retains the euclidean description, not unlike Kafka, to portray the 'inauthentic' world of empirical reality, such as that of Moran and his house filled with possessions, in Molloy.

The Beckett protagonist, from the time of Murphy (1938) onwards, seeks refuge from the exterior world of "vulgar phenomena." This world is seen as a prison, from which the hero wishes to escape into what he sees as the contrasting freedom of the mind, where he believes he will find his real self. The West Brompton world of bed-sitting rooms, of which Celia's is one, is, in Murphy's view, an assemblage of "medium-sized cages," which differ, one from the other, only according to the direction they face. Murphy himself feels a prisoner in the exterior world to which he does not want to belong, for it is life in his mind which gives him true pleasure and satisfaction. Even when travelling by bus in London, Murphy excludes the outer world by closing his eyes, relying on the bus conductor to tell him he has arrived at his destination. In trying to escape the prison-like exterior world, the Beckett protagonist, in fact, constructs a sort of cage around himself -- Malone talks of spending his life in a coma -- so as to protect himself within it. The image of the self in a portable cage or container occurs, for instance, in Molloy, the first novel of the trilogy, where Molloy says, "and when I moved from place to place, it was very slowly, as in a cage out of time."[31] Similarly, Malone in Malone Dies, sees the soul as existing in a cage, "that soul denied in vain, vigilant, anxious, turning in its cage as in a lantern, in the night without haven or craft or matter or understanding."[32] The image of the jar is used in a comparable way -- Mahood, in The Unnamable, is stuck in a jar, like a "sheaf of flowers," when he has totally lost all his limbs -- and Molloy talks of being a "sealed jar." While in Lousse's garden, Molloy momentarily forgets to hold himself within the safety of the jar:

> Yes, there were times when I forgot not only who I was, but that I was, forgot to be . . . Then I was no longer that sealed jar to which I owed my being so well preserved but a wall gave way and I filled with roots and tame stems . . . the recess of night and the imminence of dawn, and the labour of the planet rolling eager into the winter . . . But that did not happen to me often, mostly I stayed in my jar which knew neither seasons nor gardens.
>
> (Molloy, p. 49)

There is a somewhat similar image of the self becoming one with the earth in Malone Dies, where Macmann's white hair, as he lies on the ground, is glued down by the rain and "churned up with the earth and grass into a kind of muddy pulp." (Malone Dies, p. 242) Apart from indicating a form of 'cosmic insecurity,' Beckett seems to use this image of unity with the cosmos to suggest a condition where the self can no longer distinguish subject from object. Thus, as Solomon points out, Molloy sees better at the seaside, where the distant views of sea and sand are almost featureless and object and ground can hardly be confused.[33] More often, as Molloy says of himself, "I misjudged the distance separating me from the other world, and often I stretched out my hand for what was far beyond my reach, and often I knocked against obstacles scarcely visible on the horizon." (Molloy, p. 50) Total lack of a sense of differentiation between self and surrounding space accounts for the Unnamable's need for, "a little world," a place with walls, distinguishable from the void. (The Unnamable, p. 410). These images of the self as part of the universe are sufficiently ambiguous to make it difficult to know whether the Beckett protagonist fears himself 'streaming into the cosmos,' or the contrary, the invasion of the space of the self by the outer world. The images of the portable cage, and the jar (recalling Kafka's 'imagined' rooms), which not only preserve the self and its identity intact, but also protect it from the contingencies of the outer world, suggest the latter.

Just as the mind is thought of as the sanctuary of the self, so also it is thought of as a place, preferable to any in the space of empirical reality, into which the protagonist can withdraw. Murphy seeks his true self in the mind and "what he called his mind functioned not as an instrument but as a place." (Murphy, p. 178) Murphy's description of his mind is geometric; he sees it as a hollow sphere, divided into three zones, one light, one in half light and one dark. The first comes nearest to the world of reality, allowing for a little arrangement of unpleasant experiences, the second permits undisturbed contemplation and the third consists of a dark, non-Newtonian "flux of forms" over which Murphy has no control, and wants none. (Murphy, pp. 111-13) The three zones correspond roughly to the progressively darkening and deepening zones of the three novels of the trilogy.[34] At the same time as Murphy designates the space of the mind as the desired sanctuary, he, like the protagonists of the trilogy, seeks spatial analogues for the mind in the world of empirical reality, and it is noticeable that those places selected are white or grey in colour -- white is the colour of the void in Beckett's terms, according to Solomon,[35] -- or, as in the trilogy, dimly lit like the middle zone of Murphy's mind.

Murphy's own choice of room, as opposed to the bedsitting room chosen by Celia, has very little furniture in it, and has a geometric, abstract quality. The garret offered Murphy as his personal room in the nurses' quarters of the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat (M.M.M.) in London, is attractive because of its white, comparatively expansive featurelessness and the opportunity it offers for seclusion:

> The ceiling and the outer wall were one, a superb surge of white, pitched at the perfect angle of furthest trajectory, pierced by a small frosted skylight, ideal for closing against the sun by day and opening by night to the stars.
>
> (Murphy, p. 162)

It cannot compete, however, with the attractions of the padded cells at the M.M.M., which obviously bear a closer resemblance to the space of the mind, in Murphy's view:

> The pads surpassed by far all he had even been able to imagine in the way of indoor bowers of bliss. The three dimensions, slightly concave, were so exquisitely proportioned that the absence of the fourth was scarcely felt. The tender luminous oyster-grey of the pneumatic upholstery . . . lent colour to the truth that one was a prisoner of air. The temperature was such that only total nudity could do it justice. No system of ventilation appeared to dispel the illusion of respirable vacuum. The compartment was windowless . . . Within the limits of domestic architecture he had never been able to imagine a more creditable representation of what he kept on calling, indefatigably, the little world.
>
> (Murphy, p. 181)

Clov's kitchen in Endgame, is a cube. Clov describes it as having "Nice dimensions, nice proportions" and as measuring "ten feet by ten feet by ten feet."[36] Hamm's shelter (like Murphy's garret, the 'pads' and Clov's kitchen), has a geometric quality, and also resembles them in having little furniture and a uniform grey light. In the stage directions of Endgame, the shelter is described as follows: "Bare interior. Grey light. Left and right back, high up, two small windows, curtains drawn . . . Front left, touching each other, covered with an old sheet, two ashbins." (Endgame, p. 1) The two ashbins have literally become cages for Hamm's "accursed" parents, except that they contain the relics of selves that now barely exist. This shelter has been said to be an analogy for the womb and/or the skull, and as Endgame was written after the last novel of the trilogy, the play with its comparable imagery can be seen as attempting to deal with some of the same problems.

As Beckett's work proceeds towards a greater emphasis on the space of the mind, the dim light and the sparseness is retained, but the interior personal spaces of the protagonists become increasingly less clearly defined, and less geometric. In Molloy, although the novel begins with Molloy in his mother's room, almost unable to move, and the rest of his story describes in flash-back how he got there, the room is hardly described at all, and, as Molloy indicates, is of little interest to him: "But now I do not wander any more, and the confines of my room, of my bed, of my body, are as remote from me as were those of my region in the days of my splendour." (Molloy, p. 66) The landscape of Molloy's mind is much more real for him than the spatial features of his mother's room -- an analogy for the origin of self -- which grows dimmer as he retreats further into the space of his mind. Molloy refers to it variously, as a "vast region," comparable in depth to the horizontal expanses of his outer journey, as "all that inner space one never sees, the brain and heart and other caverns where thought and feeling dance their sabbath." (Molloy, p. 10), and finally, as a place that you do not go to, but, "where you find yourself, sometimes, not knowing how, and which you cannot leave at will" -- an unfamiliar, polar wasteland, whose features are at first suggested by sound rather than vision:

> I listen and the voice is of a world collapsing endlessly, a frozen world, under a faint untroubled sky, enough to see by, yes, and frozen too. And I hear it murmur that all wilts and yields, as if loaded down, but here there are no loads, and the ground too, unfit for loads, and the light too, down towards an end it seems can never come. For what possible end to these wastes where true light never was, nor any upright thing, nor any true foundation, but only

> these leaning things, forever lapsing and
> crumbling away, beneath a sky without memory
> of morning or hope of night.
>
> (Molloy, p. 40)

Although Moran's journey in the second part of Molloy, to a certain degree parallels Molloy's own, his story represents an earlier stage of the composite protagonist's life, just as Sapo's and Macmann's stories in Malone Dies, refer to even earlier and later stages respectively. Moran is very much a part of the world of empirical reality, to which Murphy reluctantly belongs -- a "creature of his house, of his garden, of his few poor possessions . . . reining back his thoughts within the limits of the calculable." (Molloy, p. 114) Beckett, partly by contrasting Moran with Molloy, is at pains to demonstrate, not unlike Kafka, that security, in this case, based on property and possessions, can be illusory, and inimical to the development of the self. It is only when Moran leaves his house, and gives up his conventional, ordered life, that his mind, previously described in more euclidean terms as resembling a labyrinth, takes on a more abstract quality, like Molloy's.

Malone is much nearer death (or the moment of 'birth' into the spaceless realm of the self), than Molloy in his mother's room; his room with its walls or boundaries, which maintain the subject/object differentiation, thus becomes more important. The increasing disorientation that Malone experiences is indicative of the imminence of the spaceless self, but the way he clings to evidence of reality as it is revealed through the 'umbilicus' of his window, anticipates the fears of the Unnamable lost in space. The room as refuge and familiar place of security is correspondingly much more marked in Malone Dies than in

Molloy, and it is with relief and confidence that Malone says, "there is nothing the various seasons can do to me, within the shelter of these walls, that I do not know." (Malone Dies, p. 186) His occasional belief that he is in a head or skull, marks a further shrinking of the spatial dimension of the self, which is eventually followed by his fluctuating sense of being 'born into death': "The ceiling rises and falls, rises and falls, rhythmically, as when I was a foetus." (Malone Dies, p. 283) Talking of Beckett's early unpublished draft of More Pricks, entitled, A Dream of Fair to Middling Women, Jean-Jacques Mayoux refers to Belacqua's use of the image "wombtomb" to express the idea of birth/death and his hope that death would resemble both withdrawal into the spaceless mind and the peace and warmth of the womb.[37]

The Unnamable, following on from Malone, is a speck in the void lacking almost all spatial dimension; he is the logical outcome of the spiralling movement of the trilogy. Almost spaceless, he has no sense of the existence of any self, and thus tries desperately to situate himself in space -- ironically, using euclidean terms:

> But, as I have said, the place may well be vast, as it may well measure twelve feet in diameter . . . I like to think I occupy the centre, but nothing is less certain. In a sense I would be better at the circumference . . . From centre to circumference it is a far cry and I may well be situated somewhere between the two.
>
> (The Unnamable, p. 295)

This moment marks Beckett's disillusion with the mind as the place in which the self is to be found. He told Israel Shenker in an interview (May 6, 1956) that, "In the last book, L'Innomable, there's complete disintegration. No 'I', no 'have', no 'being'. No nominative, no accusative, no verb . . . There's no way to go on."[38]

Whereas Beckett's final disillusion with the mind as seat of the essential self is reached gradually and only finally in The Unnamable, the understanding of the connection between the existence of space and the self begins early in Kafka's work, in "Description of a Struggle." Both the latter and "The Metamorphosis", fundamentally question the stability of self and the corresponding space of the self. In both writers, the search for the self breaks down in the very place where it is least expected -- in the bedroom, as metaphor for the core of the self, and in the space of the mind. In the enclosed space of the 'Other,' or non-self, which affects the Kafka protagonist much more than the Beckettian character, the self is again threatened. Both Kafka, and Beckett to a lesser degree portray the self as victim, the former, as victim of other people, the latter, as victim predominantly of the natural processes of decay and of his environment.

Notes to Chapter One

[1] Franz Kafka, "The Eight Octavo Notebooks," in Wedding Preparations in the Country and Other Posthumous Prose Writings, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954), p. 54.

Franz Kafka, "Die Acht Oktavhefte," in Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande und andere Prosa aus dem Nachlass (New York: Schocken Books, 1953), p. 55.

[2] Samuel Beckett, Molloy, in Three Novels [the Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable], first published in French: Molloy and Malone Meurt (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1951), L'Innommable (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1953), Molloy, trans. Patrick Bowles in collaboration with the author, Malone Dies and The Unnamable, trans. the author (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 51. All further references to this work will be to the above edition and will hereafter be made in the text according to the name of the novel concerned.

[3] Hoffman, p. 42

[4] George H. Szanto, Narrative Consciousness: Structure and Perception in the Fiction of Kafka, Beckett, and Robbe-Grillet (Austin and London: Univ. of Texas Press, 1972), p. 9.

[5] Hoffman, pp. 59 and 61.

[6] Samuel Beckett, Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit (1931; rpt. London: John Calder, 1976), p. 65.

[7] Hoffman, p. 73.

[8] Franz Kafka, "Description of a Struggle" in Franz Kafka: The Complete Works (1971; rpt. New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 12. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition, and will hereafter appear in the text as "DS."

Franz Kafka, "Beschreibung eines Kampfes" in Beschreibung eines Kampfes: Novellen, Skizzen, Aphorismen aus dem Nachlass (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), p. 15. All further references to this work in German will be to the above edition, and will hereafter appear in the text as "B."

[9] Kafka, "The Eight Octavo Notebooks," p. 54/ "Die Achte Oktavhefte," p. 55.

[10] Franz Kafka, "Wedding Preparations in the Country," in Franz Kafka: The Complete Works (1971; rpt. New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 60. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition, and will hereafter appear in the text as "WP."

Franz Kafka, "Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande," in *Hochzeitsvorbereitungen aud dem Lande und andere Prosa aus dem Nachlass* (New York: Schocken Books, 1953), p. 18. All further references to this work in German will be to the above edition, and will hereafter appear in the text as "H."

[11] Gesine Frey, p. 17.

[12] Frey, p. 14.

[13] Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis," in *Franz Kafka: The Complete Works*, pp. 100-1. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition, and will hereafter appear in the text as "M."

Franz Kafka, "Die Verwandlung," in *Erzählungen und Kleine Prosa* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), p. 83. All further references to this book in German will be to the above edition and will hereafter appear in the text as "V."

[14] Frey, p. 17.

[15] Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, Penguin Modern Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 27. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition and will hereafter appear in the text as *T*.

Franz Kafka, *Der Prozess* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), p. 30. All further references to this work in German will be to the above edition and will hereafter appear in the text as *P*.

[16] Szanto, pp. 20 and 23.

[17] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, eds. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, trans. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), p. 13. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition.

Franz Kafka, *Briefe An Felice: und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 55. All further references to this work in German will be to the above edition.

[18] Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, p. 120/ *Briefe an Felice*, p. 202.

[19] Frey, p. 12.

[20] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka* (1910-1913) ed. Max Brod, trans. Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), pp. 150 and 168-9. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition.

Franz Kafka, Tagebücher (1910-1923), hrsg. Max Brod (New York: Schocken Books, 1949), pp. 160 and 180. All further references to this work in German will be to the above edition.

[21] Frey, p. 11.

[22] Henry Sussman, Franz Kafka: Geometrician of Metaphor (Madison, WI: Coda Press, 1979), p. 86.

[23] Beckett, Proust, p. 21.

[24] Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka: A Critical Study of His Writings, trans. Sheema Zeben Buehne (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1963), p. 276.

[25] Franz Kafka, The Man Who Was Lost Sight Of, or America, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (1938; London: Secker and Warburg, 1967), p. 58. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition and will appear in the text as Man to differentiate it clearly from M ("The Metamorphosis"). Although this novel is better known as America, for the purposes of this study, the alternative title, employed by Kafka in his diaries, will be used.

Franz Kafka, Der Verschollene, or Amerika: Roman (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), p. 58. All further references to this work in German will be to the above edition and will appear in the text as Vsch. to differentiate it clearly from "V" ("Die Verwandlung").

[26] Kafka, Diaries (1910-1913), p. 59./ Tagebücher (1910-1923), p. 58.

[27] Emrich, Franz Kafka, p. 371.

[28] Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable in Three Novels the trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 399. All further references to this work will be to the above edition and will be made in the text.

[29] Samuel Beckett, More Pricks Than Kicks (1934; London: Calder and Boyars, 1970), pp. 10-11.

[30] Samuel Beckett, Murphy (1938; New York: Grove Press, 1957), p. 63. All further references to this work will be to the above edition, and will be made in the text.

[31] Samuel Beckett, Molloy, in Three Novels (New York: Grove Press, 1975), p. 51. All further references to this work will be to the above edition and will be made in the text.

[32] Samuel Beckett, Malone Dies, in Three Novels (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 222. All further references to this work will be to the above edition and will be made in the text.

[33] Solomon, p. 36.

[34] Ross Chambers, "Samuel Beckett and the Padded Cell," *Meanjin Quarterly*, 10 (21 Dec. 1962), 453.

[35] Philip H. Solomon, "Purgatory Unpurged: Time, Space and Language in 'Lessness'," "*Journal of Beckett Studies*," No. 6 (Autumn 1980), pp. 65 and 66.

[36] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*: *A Play in One Act*, [includes "Act Without Words: A Mime for One Player"], first published in French as *Fin de Partie*, suivi de "Acte sans Paroles" (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1957), trans. the author (New York, Grove Press, 1958), p. 2. All further references to this work will be to the above edition and will hereafter be made in the text.

[37] Jean-Jacques Mayoux, *Samuel Beckett*, *Writers and their Work*, ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert, published for The British Council (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1974), p. 8.

[38] Israel Shenker, "Moody Man of Letters," *New York Times*. 6 May 1956, Sec. 2, pp. 1 and 3.

CHAPTER TWO

The Space of the 'Other'

Whereas the Kafka protagonist tries desperately to live in society and yet often becomes its victim, the Beckett character avoids it as much as possible, and since his physical requirements are minimal, with few exceptions, he remains fairly independent of others well on into old age. It is noticeable that the spatial characteristics of the rooms of the 'Other' in Kafka allow little or no space for the self of the protagonist, whereas the Beckett character, even if imprisoned as Molloy is for an unspecified time in Lousse's house, remains in his personal 'cage,' keeping himself inviolate and free to pursue his normal, interior course.

The rooms of the 'Other' in Kafka are frequently characterized by lack of space as the result of being overcrowded with furniture and/or people, by darkness, and by unbreathable air. Movement is sometimes so restricted that it necessitates unwanted physical contact with other people. The image of air which can be breathed by one person but not another indicates so fundamental a difference between them, that it is likely to be irreconcilable within the context of any given novel. In varying degrees, these broad characteristics apply to small, single rooms of the 'Other' as well as to larger public spaces, such as the saloon in the Hotel Occidental in The Man and the court-room in The Trial. The approaches, corridors and stairways of the more complex units, such as those of the tenements and the exterior spaces, each have rather different characteristics, but in all the spaces of the 'Other,' the protagonist feels alienated, and risks the loss of the spatial self. Yet there remains a certain ambiguity in the protagonists' view of the 'Other' or non-self, for while it is preponderantly threatening, it is often only in confrontation with the 'Other' that the self can define itself, as is particularly evident in Kafka's works. The need to be seen by the 'Other,' a theme in both Kafka's and Beckett's works, is only one aspect of the self's ambiguous need for the 'Other.' As has been shown, Kafka often uses elements of euclidean spatial description to highlight the characteristics of the world of empirical reality, in his case usually the 'work-world,' but in the spaces of the 'Other' this type of description often acts as a foil where another more poetic use of space is employed to make a particular point. In the peasants' kitchen in The Castle (Das Schloss, 1922), for instance, K.'s careful euclidean description of the room, not only underlines the limitations of rationality, but also emphasizes his own inability to penetrate the mystery of the room with its strange light, or to become part of the life there.[1]

Although Beckett often depicts the exterior, empirical world in terms of prison imagery, it is rare for the Beckett protagonist to allow himself to be trapped in that world. Significantly, perhaps, Molloy loses his freedom on the two occasions when he is in a town, once because he is arrested by the police and secondly because Lousse, like a modern Circe, contrives to keep him in her house, mostly against his will, by means of her "miserable molys." Larger, complex spaces of the 'Other' are correspondingly few in Beckett's work -- the only one of any significance is the M.M.M., the mental hospital in Murphy. By contrast with Kafka, the vast, rather impersonal exterior landscapes in which Beckett's 'trilogy' characters move, are almost featureless and abstract, denuded of objects and people except for the occasional lone traveller with his dog, or a shepherd with his flock. Few of the people whom Molloy and Moran meet on their separate journeys pose any threat to them, and those that do, such as the charcoal burner in Molloy's story, and Moran's double, his "dark self," are killed with almost unnecessary violence. In Beckett's view, the greatest threat to man is the "loneliness and cruelty of existence" and the "Time cancer," as Beckett referred to it in Proust, which inevitably hastens the day when the physical self will fall victim to "disease and infirmity."[2]

In Kafka's, The Man, Karl Rossman, the young protagonist, is virtually held prisoner for varying lengths of time, in at least three places: in the stoker's cabin, the hotel porter's office and Brunelda's room, and in each he is subject to a degree of physical restraint. While the stoker's cabin is a "wretched cubby-hole," the porter's office in the Hotel Occidental is light and spacious with glass windows opening on to the hotel vestibule. The porter converts it into a dark, prison-like room in which he can physically hurt Karl with impunity, by drawing long black curtains over the glass panes of his half of the office. Anticipating the crowded, stuffy rooms of the court in The Trial, Brunelda's room is small, dark and overcrowded with furniture. The three trunks that Karl notices first, and the lack of a window, give it the look of a lumber room:

> They stepped into complete darkness. The curtain before the balcony door -- there was no window -- was completely drawn and let very little light

> through; but the fact that the room was crammed with furniture and clothes hanging everywhere contributed greatly to make it darker. The air was musty and one could literally smell the dust which had gathered here in corners apparently beyond the reach of any hand.
>
> (Man p. 235/Vsch. p. 252)

While Karl, Robinson and Delamarche, his captors, and Brunelda, watch the election procession, Brunelda restrains Karl physically with her body pressed against him, and when he later tries to escape, Delamarche knocks him unconscious.

In the later novels, The Trial and The Castle, Kafka makes a more thematic and functional use of space. While the qualities of Brunelda's room anticipate those of the court-room it bears little obvious relationship to any other room in The Man, except in so far as it represents an extreme form of the restrictions already evident in the stoker's cabin. In The Trial and The Castle, on the other hand, though with very different effects in the two novels, there are recognizable similarities between, for instance, the rooms which characterize the court and those which have a connection with the Castle, such as the attic waiting room and the peasants' kitchen respectively. In the former, euclidean space description, indicating the connection of the guilty clients with the work-world, and unbreathable air, proclaim its 'Otherness' for Joseph K., while, in the latter, a mysterious unreal light and an impenetrable steam-laden air indicate its connection with the Castle. The attic waiting room in The Trial is filled with people like Joseph K., who behave almost identically. Shabbily dressed and with similarly cut beards, they sit singly at regular intervals, on wooden benches on either side of the corridor, their hats placed neatly on the floor beneath them. For Joseph K., the air becomes rapidly unbreathable, as it does in the court-room and in the studio of the court painter, Titorelli, because K. will not admit his guilt to himself:

> He felt as if he were seasick. He felt he was in a ship rolling in heavy seas. It was as if the waters were dashing against the wooden walls, as if the roaring of breaking waves came from the end of the passage, as if the passage itself pitched and rolled and the waiting clients on either side rose and fell with it . . . he heard nothing but the din that filled the whole place, through which a shrill unchanging note like that of a siren seemed to ring.
>
> (_T_ p. 83/_P_ p. 82)

As indicated earlier, this depiction of the space and air of the 'Other' as a totally alien element for the self is common in Kafka, but, whereas in _The Trial_ it indicates the chasm between Joseph K. and the life of the court, which he despises, in _The Castle_, it indicates a dimension of life to which K. cannot attain, even though he may wish to do so.

The larger, public spaces of the 'Other,' such as the saloon of the Hotel Occidental in _The Man_, and the court-room in _The Trial_ exhibit the spatial characteristics already isolated in the single rooms. The crowded, smoky saloon anticipates the court-room, only in the former, the crowds are mainly seated. The euclidean description of the layout of the room with its buffet, running on both sides and down the length of the room, the centre filled with small, crowded tables, and the smoky atmosphere, indicate the presence of the 'Other,' which in this case is perceived as hostile vis à vis an 'innocent' protagonist. The room is so crowded, both with furniture and people, that Karl's ability to move is restricted to the point where his personal space is threatened by forced contact with customers, who become more and more numerous, and, at the counter, the elbows of the men on either side of him prevent him from seeing beyond them, and at the same time prevent him from being seen. The speed with which the waiters rush to and fro constitutes a further element of hostile space peculiar to The Man -- it echoes the speed of the life outside in the streets, the "movement without end" of the boats in the harbour, and the frenzied movement of cars and people that Karl witnesses in the street below his balcony at his uncle's house. The combination of all these factors with Karl's unfamiliarity with the workings of the saloon, results in no one paying any attention to him -- he is both physically entrapped by the crush of people and yet seemingly 'lost sight of,' as if he does not exist (Man pp. 126-28/ Vsch. pp. 132-34). The experience has something in common with the sensation of being invisible felt by Edouard Raban in the streets of Prague, in "Wedding."

The court-room in The Trial exhibits all the typical characteristics of the space of the 'Other': dim light, stuffy air, crowds of people and forced physical contact. Set in the midst of ordinary life -- it is reached by walking up five flights of stairs in a poor people's tenement building, and through a small one-roomed apartment, where a young woman is washing clothes -- its manifest connection with the everyday world of empirical reality is emphasized by the careful euclidean description of its exact location in the tenement. The court-room itself is described as a medium-sized room with two windows; it appears particularly crowded because it has a low elevated platform at the far end and a gallery just below the roof, both as crowded with standing people as is the main floor of the room. The uniform

'Otherness' of the main crowd is emphasized by the fact that it consists mainly of old men with stiff beards, dressed in long, black loosely hanging clothes. As in the case of Karl in the saloon, nobody in the crowd pays any attention to Joseph K. until he makes his speech from the crowded platform. It is when he tries to intervene personally to investigate what he sees as an annoying disturbance at the back of the room that he angers the crowd, which physically restrains him:

> . . . someone's hand -- he had no time to turn round -- seized him from behind by the collar, old men stretched out their arms to bar his way . . . it seemed to him as if his freedom were being threatened, as if he were being arrested in earnest . . .
>
> (T p. 56/P p. 56)

For Joseph K., the 'Otherness' of the court proclaims his guilt, which he will never admit.

The careful, euclidean description of the Cathedral denotes the existence of the ordered universe of the spiritual 'Other,' to which ordinary, guilty man can only aspire. The relative unimportance of man is underlined by emphasizing man's smallness and by Joseph K.'s inability to penetrate the darkness of the Cathedral. To the side of the main aisle where Joseph K. sits, is a small, simple pulpit of plain, bleak stone, which he does not see at first. In contrast to the main pulpit, this one, seen from a distance, "looked like an empty niche intended for a statue" (T p. 228/P p. 218), and the stairs up to it looked too small for a human being to pass. Above all, the darkness of the Cathedral is emphasized, a darkness evident from the outset but which grows in intensity, until K., rebuked by the priest for relying too much on outside help in the prosecution of his case, notices that no light is coming in through the stained glass in the great window, "black night had set in." (T p. 233/P p. 223) There is no suggestion of lack of space to move in the Cathedral, but the theme of imprisonment, in darkness and death, is underlined. A prisoner of his own blindness, K. carefully inspects the stone work carving of the great pulpit, where "the deep caverns of darkness among and behind the foliage, looked as if caught and imprisoned there." (T p. 227/P p. 217) With the aid of a pocket torch, he also inspects an altar piece in a side chapel, which depicts a huge, armoured knight, attentively watching from a distance as Christ is laid in the tomb. The huge, dark expanse of the Cathedral emphasizes above all the smallness and insignificance of man. The knight on the altar-piece may seem huge, but the construction of the small pulpit, made to "harass the preacher," reminding him of the limits of the human frame, underlines the reality. K. himself, summoned to stand near the priest, feels a forlorn, solitary figure as he approaches the place below the pulpit indicated by the priest, and "the size of the Cathedral struck him as bordering on the limit of what human beings could bear." (T p. 230/P p. 220)

Often similarly dim or dark, the approaches to the rooms of the 'Other' are threatening in a different way. Sometimes involving endless stairs and labyrinthine corridors, they obtrude between the protagonist and his destination, often ending suddenly, as in a nightmare landscape, menacing him with the possibility of losing his way, or with sudden death. Karl Rossman, in The Man, has two such experiences, once when he gets lost in the intricate, twisting corridors below deck in the ship, and secondly, when he finds himself in the dark, unfinished part of Mr. Pollunder's large, country house:

> Suddenly the wall on one side of the corridor came to an end, and an ice cold, a marble balustrade appeared in its place. Karl leaned over. A breath of dark emptiness met him . . . in the glimmer of the candle a piece of vault-like ceiling could be seen . . . One stood here as if in the gallery of a church . . . The balustrade was quite short and soon Karl was once more groping along a closed corridor. At a sudden turning he ran full tilt into the wall . . . the corridor seemed to have no end -- no window appeared through which he could see where he was, nothing stirred either above or below him -- Karl began to think that he was going round in a circle . . .
>
> (Man pp. 83-4/Vsch. p. 86)

Terese, the young typist at the Hotel Occidental in the same novel, describes a similar experience that she and her mother had, when the latter was seeking work, and prior to falling to her death from an unfinished building. In both cases, the image is of a labyrinth, which never seems to lead anywhere and which arouses the fears of being in a space without order or limit, such as Beckett's Unnamable experiences.

The space of the protagonist himself can be taken over by the 'Other,' apparently without warning as happens, for instance, in "The Metamorphosis" and The Trial. In the former, this, in effect, happens as soon as Gregor Samsa awakes to find himself imprisoned in an insect body, but beyond this, the bedroom itself becomes a prison for the insect, ostensibly, at least, on account of the four doors which Gregor formerly kept locked from the inside. These doors become the principal means whereby the Samsa family, particularly the father and sister, control the insect's movements. The doors are mainly kept locked from the outside, with the exception of the double door leading to the living-room, which is kept closed most of the time, providing access for Gregor's sister, Grete. Once Gregor's father has permanently injured him by throwing apples at him, the double doors are usually opened towards evening to allow Gregor to watch the family at supper, then closed just after ten. On the occasion when the insect comes out of his room for the last time, the door has been left open accidently. Once the family has, implicitly or explicitly, agreed with Grete that the insect should die, and she has locked his door in triumph, it is clear that he would not have been allowed to die naturally, had he not done so the same evening.

Another characteristic space of the 'Other' is the lumber room -- Brunelda's room in The Man has certain of its characteristics, and Gregor Samsa's room in "The Metamorphosis" gradually becomes one. The lumber room has certain ambiguous characteristics. Normally used as a place for discarded things, in Kafka's work, as Emrich has suggested, it may represent a liberating aspect of the protagonist's being, which he wishes to ignore, such as his emotional, and/or sexual, instinctive self -- the "sensual" groom who appears out of the country doctor's unused pigsty is an example.[3] The doctor's servant girl refers to this elemental self when she says, "You never know what you're going to find in your own house."[4] Emrich also points out that, for Kafka, images of "brokenness, decay, old age, childlike nature, uselessness, lifelessness", represent "a sphere . . . that is free of purpose," as opposed to the plan-making consciousness of the 'work-world.'[5] Joseph K., in The Trial, as representative of the latter, is one-sidedly rational, and is therefore not an integrated personality. The court reflects this: everything not mastered within himself becomes "tormentingly visible" in his trial.[6] The lumber room in the bank corridor, where the Whipper is birching the warders who arrested Joseph K., is part of this court -- the law exercises "unlimited powers of extension and withdrawal, displacement and usurpation"[7] -- and the fact that K. closes the door on them, putting his own concern with prestige before their sufferings and his part in them, is part of his total guilt, which he persistently refuses to recognize.

Gesine Frey emphasizes the non-empirical nature of some aspects of Kafka's depiction of space, in which poetic rather than narrative logic predominates. According to her, the lumber room is only small and cramped in K.'s view.[8] Kafka indicates that the Whipper is perfectly able to perform his function, despite the apparent spatial limitations. Similarly, in Titorelli's studio in The Trial, in which towards the end of his visit, Joseph K. cannot breathe, Frey points out that the stove is not lit and that it is a cold day, so that the warm, unbreathable air cannot be accounted for empirically. The Advocate Huld's private office at home, in the same novel, provides a third and interesting example of conflicting spatial signals. Frey emphasizes the anomaly between the fact that the room is very dark, except for the small patch of bright moonlight in front of the two large windows, and the fact that Joseph K. is able to see the colour and other details of the painting of the Judge, which hangs to the right of the door.[9] Although K. is able to see this picture in the dark, he cannot see Leni's webbed fingers, though she is sitting quite close to him, and she can see the details of the snapshot of his friend Elsa. There is obviously a difference between the way Joseph K. and Leni see, which is not empirically based, but which is linked to K.'s preconceptions of the court and his blindness to his own failings on the one hand, and to Leni's inside knowledge of the court on the other. This disparity is underlined by the difference between K.'s perception of the Judge in the painting and Leni's knowledge of the man himself. While K. notes that the Judge in his robe is sitting on a high, gilded throne-like seat, clutching one arm of the chair and ready to spring up to announce the sentence, Leni points out, that in reality, the judge resembles a dwarf, and that at the time the portrait was painted he was actually seated on a kitchen chair with an old horse blanket folded up under him. As Gesine Frey, following Walser, suggests, space in Kafka is often not that of empirical reality but is distorted to serve a particular function -- that of clarifying inner happenings.[10]

The very rarity of the Beckettian protagonist's confrontation with the 'Other' denotes the latter's unimportance for Beckett. As has already been noted, even when Beckett's characters find themselves in the world of the 'Other,' they are usually able to retire into the cage or sealed jar of the self and ignore it. This is mainly true both of the more private, enclosed space of Lousse's house where Molloy is induced to stay for an indefinite period of time, and of the public space of the guardroom at the police station in which he is forcibly detained for a few hours.

When Molloy tries to describe these places, he does it from memory -- it forms part of the story of his life which he is writing. Not only does he not remember clearly, but he tends to confuse one thing and one time with another. For instance, he is not sure whether the windows he recalls at Lousse's house were one or several different windows, and since his account is fictional, one cannot be certain what is added to embroider it. In describing space as well as objects and events so vaguely Molloy devalues it, while at the same time undermining the value of memory, the accuracy of perception and the possibility of objective truth.

Although Molloy supposedly occupies several different rooms in Lousse's house in the course of his time there, he only attempts to describe the first, where he actually wakes to find himself a prisoner, the door locked, his clothes gone, his beard cut. This description is amended several times -- Molloy talks of making more than one inspection of the room -- and varies according to his subjective perception of it and to the needs of the fiction. He obviously feels overwhelmed at first, for he portrays the room as chock-full of pouffes and easy chairs, as well as an abundance of occasional tables, footstools and tallboys, which give him a "Strange feeling of congestion that the night dispersed." (Molloy, p. 38) The number of pieces has in fact lessened by the time he knocks them over with his crutch, for "They were fewer than in the night." (Molloy, p. 43) At another time, the room seems, "at first sight a perfect cube" (Molloy, p. 42), and on yet another occasion, he "was on the point of endowing it with other properties," when he is disturbed. (Molloy, p. 43)

This imprisonment only lasts overnight, and afterwards, Molloy is free to wander at will in the garden or in any room in the house, so that he is able to continue his pursuit of self while there. According to Solomon, time slows down for Molloy, during this period -- hence his feeling that the world outside is moving at a different pace from him -- so that he, in fact, moves nearer to the timeless and spaceless self he finally hopes to attain at his mother's house. The immobile house therefore becomes an analogue for the cage in which he always moves. Thus, "when I moved, from place to place, it was very slowly, as in a cage out of time . . . and out of space too to be sure." (Molloy, p. 51) Just as the room serves as a "metaphor for the self,"[11] so a series of rooms stand as a metaphor for the changing self, which itself is pictured, at any one time, as immobile, unchanging, and in a cage.

Again, there are few large public spaces of the 'Other' in Beckett's works; the only one of interest is the guardroom of the prison in Molloy, in which the protagonist is held for a short time. After a brief interlude, in which Molloy uncharacteristically enjoys the sun and the company of others and is pleased to be relieved of "the burden of self-definition,"[12] once in the guardroom, he again withdraws into himself. As was indicated earlier, Molloy shows his contempt for the world of spatial reality by describing it vaguely, and by recalling everyday happenings involving people and events indistinctly. Thus, in the dark guardroom, the woman who offers Molloy refreshment is less clearly remembered than the mug of tea and the bread that she offers him:

> But suddenly a woman rose up before me, a big fat woman dressed in black, or rather in mauve. I still wonder if it wasn't the social worker. She was holding out to me on an odd saucer, a mug full of a greyish concoction which must have been green tea with saccharine and powdered milk. Nor was that all, for between mug and saucer a thick slab of dry bread was precariously lodged . . .
>
> (Molloy, p. 23)

Events too, are just as unimportant. When Molloy flings the tea from him, he cannot remember the details, except that "I threw it to the ground, where it smashed to smithereens, or against the wall far from me." (Molloy, p. 24)

Beckett does not describe the buildings of the mental hospital in Murphy, as threatening, because Murphy is particularly drawn to the place as a retreat from the outside world, and to the patients, seeing in their rejection of the "big world," an attitude akin to his own. Instead, Beckett takes the opportunity to ridicule the world of empirical reality and, incidentally, of institutionalized religion, as well as the techniques of the traditional novel which aims to reflect it:

> North of the nave were the kitchen, patients' refectory, nurses' refectory, drug arsenal, patients' lavatory, nurses' lavatory, visitors' lavatory etc. The bedridden and more refactory cases were kept together as far as possible in the south transept, off which opened the padded cells.
>
> (Murphy, p. 167)

The mentally ill patients, however, are somehow idealized by their resemblance to the tormented souls of Dante's Purgatorio:

> Melancholics, motionless and brooding, holding their heads or bellies according to type. Paranoids feverishly covering sheets of paper with complaints against their treatment or verbatim reports of their inner voices . . . An emaciated schizoid, petrified in a toppling attitude as though condemned to an eternal *tableau vivant*.
>
> (Murphy, pp. 167-68)

The enclosed spaces of the 'Other' in Kafka are both much more frequent and more threatening than in Beckett. The difference in frequency alone indicates how much the protagonist in Kafka tries to become one with society, while the Beckett character is only concerned to keep himself inviolate from it. The various enclosed spaces of the 'Other,' in Kafka's works, threaten the self with the total loss of personal space, so that it is as much a victim of the 'Other,' as it is a victim of its own illusions and failures. Beckett's protagonists, on the other hand, as has been seen in the case of Molloy, if inadvertently caught in the space of the 'Other,' usually retreat into themselves and resume their interior course. A very similar pattern emerges if one looks at the exterior spaces of the 'Other' in the two writers.

It is much more usual for the Kafka protagonist to be indoors than out, but when outside, he tends to be in urban or suburban streets, rather than in the countryside. It is rare, on the other hand, for Beckett's characters to be in towns -- "enough of being abroad, trapped, visible," says Molloy, after being chased by a mob in the town -- they more often pursue their lone journeys in vast featureless spaces of the countryside, in what appears to be an Irish 'wasteland.' The exception occurs in Murphy, a more traditional novel, which has recognizable settings in London and Dublin.

The urban landscape of Kafka is filled with objects, buildings and people, to which his protagonists try to get as close as possible in their efforts to become part of the life around them and to understand it. Hoffman talks of Kafka's "remarkable skill in presenting the minutiae of a setting [which] suggests a realistic miniaturist, who moves closer and closer to an object . . ."[13] Yet, in "Wedding," although Edouard Raban tries to describe everything he sees in the city, it somehow remains passively hostile and he feels alienated by it. In this story, as Emrich points out, Kafka, whose work is best understood as stemming from naturalism, "records accurately all the events that take place first in a street of a large city and later in a train . . . he tries to seize life as it flows past." Yet "there is an astonishing disparity between the exactness of such descriptions and the interpretation of what has been described," for, in spite of careful observation, to Raban, everything remains incomprehensible and strange.[14] This is suggested, for instance, by his belief that the lady on the steps opposite is looking at him indifferently, or is perhaps not looking at him at all, but at the rain in front of him, or the nameplates of firms on the door behind him:

> One works so feverishly at the office, but even all that work does not give one a claim to be treated lovingly by everyone; on the contrary one is alone, a total stranger and only an object of curiosity. And so long as you say 'one' instead of 'I' there's nothing in it and one can easily tell the story; but as soon as you admit to yourself that it is you yourself, you feel as though transfixed and horrified.
>
> ("WP" p. 53/"H" p. 8)

The possibility of not being seen at all suggests the terrifying loss of all spatial extension and therefore of the self, and for Raban this is a more frightening possibility than mere indifference. Before he thinks of the more attractive plan of remaining in bed as a beetle to avoid travelling to the country -- a day-dream he often had as a child -- Raban pictures all the people around him in the city and those he is likely to meet in the course of his journey, as "people who try to torment me, and who have now occupied the entire space around me." ("WP" p. 55/"H" p. 11) In his dream, however, the city people are shy and "every step they want to advance they ask as a favor from me, by looking at me." (my italics, "WP" p. 56/"H" p. 12) Writing in the early twentieth century, Georg Simmel described this sense of dissassociation or alienation, which Kafka seems to have experienced, pointing out that "one nowhere feels as lonely and lost as in the metropolitan crowd . . . because the bodily proximity and narrowness of space makes the mental distance only the more visible."[15]

For Beckett, in contrast to Kafka, the exterior, urban world is the world of "vulgar phenomena," from which the Beckett protagonist seeks to withdraw. The sights and sounds of the world are something, Murphy, for instance, does not like for "They detained him in the world to which they belonged, but not he, as he fondly hoped." (Murphy, p. 2) As Federman says:

> In Beckett's universe, the city as setting remains the domain of realism and rationality, whereas the countryside represents the region of pure imagination, the landscape of fictional absurdity. To escape from humanity, Beckett's heroes strive to leave the city in order to immerse themselves in the wasteland that lies beyond the city limits, beyond civilization. From the well-defined streets, restaurants, pubs, houses and public buildings of the English fiction . . . to the barren fields, deserted roads, stony beaches, dark forests and ditches of Beckett's more recent fictions, there is a definite progression into the unreal which corresponds to the character's exile from society and their gradual metamorphosis from an upright condition to a reptilian or vegetal status.[16]

Murphy apart, only in Molloy does Beckett concern himself briefly with the town as exemplar of social realism, and then not in spatial terms, but to underline the active hostility and cruelty of that world and the way in which it searches for victims who reject its values. Thus when he runs over Lousse's dog, Molloy is attacked "by a bloodthirsty mob of both sexes and ages" and on leaving the town, in the morning, judges it wise to hide from the human rat-catchers, for "Day is the time for lynching." (Molloy, pp. 32 and 67)

Beckett's rural wasteland, in contrast to the particularized, urban landscape of Kafka, is almost featureless, denuded of objects and almost denuded of people, except for an occasional solitary traveller or, more rarely, a 'few local peasant women.' Whereas the Kafka protagonist seeks to define himself through interaction with the 'Other,' the Beckett character not only insulates himself against society, but, to a certain degree, likes to dominate the space of others. This is evident, as has been seen, from the way in which the Beckett protagonist is able to preserve his interior life inviolate, even under conditions of imprisonment, and in Beckett's liking for featureless, distant views of the landscape and the sea-shore, sometimes from a height, where people are seen in the far distance reduced to mere specks. Beckett's first image for the journey of the self is taken from such a landscape, in Molloy; it features a bare, white road (where two barely differentiated travellers unknowingly move towards each other), seen from the vantage point of the mountains. A bird's eye view of the tops of these mountains also supplies an early image of the mind, "all that inner space one never sees, the brain and heart and other caverns where thought and feeling dance their sabbath . . .":

> . . . indigo in places in the evening light, their serried ranges crowding to the skyline, cloven with hidden valleys that the eye divines from sudden shifts of colour and then from other signs for which there are no words, or even thoughts. But all are not divined, even from that height, and often where only one escarpment is discerned, and one crest, in reality there are two, two escarpments, two crests, riven by a valley.
>
> (Molloy, pp. 9-10)

As indicated overleaf, people are not a part of this landscape, except, like the women collecting driftwood on the sea shore, as distant black specks in an otherwise empty landscape. The travellers met by Molloy and Moran are, more often than not, unwelcome aspects of themselves, and, as has been seen, are usually summarily dispatched.

If the Beckett character is to be seen as a victim, as André Karatson maintains, beyond being "créateur de ses difficultés,"[17] he is surely predominantly a victim of an unknowable and unpredictable universe. As Solomon says of the aging Macmann, one of Malone's invented fictional characters who is obliged to drag himself over the ground, "Macmann's solitary and painful journey is the voyage of Everyman, and the way in which men move testifies to the loneliness and cruelty of existence."[18] As has already been noted (p. 25 of this study), the ambiguous image of the self being imploded by the forces of nature, and/or that of the self streaming into the universe, is indicative of the subject/object confusion sometimes experienced by the Beckett protagonist; it could also be seen as evidence of fear of a capricious universe on the part of its "créature victime," as well as of fear of the loss of personal space, comparable to that of Raban in "Wedding."

No matter whether, as in the case of Kafka, the protagonist's search for himself requires encounter with the 'Other,' either seen as individuals, objects or space, or, whether, as in Beckett, it is effected through the medium of psychic distancing of the 'Other,' both sets of protagonists necessarily experience problems of perception. For Emrich, as has been seen, the pursuit of self in Kafka and Beckett leads to the destruction of empirical reality. (p. 2 of this study) Conversely, it could be said that problems of perception are instrumental in casting doubt on the self, a point of view that will now be examined.

Notes to Chapter Two

[1] Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, Penguin Modern Classics (Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin Books in association with Martin Secker and Warburg, 1957), pp. 18-19. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition, and will hereafter appear in the text as *C*.

Franz Kafka, *Das Schloss* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), pp. 21-22. All further references to this work in German will be to the above edition, and will hereafter appear in the text as *S*.

[2] Solomon, *The Life After Birth*, p. 75.

[3] Emrich, pp. 151 and 155-59.

[4] Franz Kafka, "A Country Doctor," in *Franz Kafka: The Complete Works*, p. 220. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition.

Franz Kafka, "Ein Landarzt," in *Erzählungen und Kleine Prosa* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), p. 134. All further references to this work in German will be to the above edition.

[5] Emrich, pp. 122-23.

[6] Emrich, p. 332.

[7] Sussman, p. 86.

[8] Frey, p. 43

[9] Frey, p. 183.

[10] Frey, p. 181.

[11] Solomon, p. 67.

[12] Solomon, p. 98.

[13] Hoffman, p. 44.

[14] Emrich, p. 27.

[15] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1902-3), in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950), p. 418.

[16] Federman, p. 142.

[17] André Karatson, "Problèmes du Personnage Romanesque chez les Précurseurs du Nouveau Roman," Roman Nouvelle Essai XIX-XX^{e} Siècles, Revue de Littérature Comparée 53, 1 (janvier-mars 1979) 64.

[18] Solomon, p. 75.

CHAPTER THREE

Instability of Space: The 'Breakdown of the Object'

> L'esthétique de Redon correspond à une conception particulière de l'espace plastique, volontairement déterminé. Jean Setz a justement montré l'ambiguité de cet espace. Toute chose mise en rapport avec cet espace incertain devient elle-même object de l'incertitude.[1]

External space can only be said to exist as long as there are stable and permanent objects occupying it. This is an oversimplification of a view elaborated by Jean Piaget in 1926:

> A world composed of permanent objects constitutes not only a spatial universe but also a world obeying the principle of causality in the form of relationships between things and regulated in time *without continuous articulations or resurrections*. Hence it is a universe both stable and external, relatively distinct from the internal world and one in which the subject places himself as *one particular term among all the other terms*. A universe without objects, on the other hand, is a world in which space does not constitute a solid environment but is limited to structuring the subject's very acts; it is a world of pictures, each of which can be known and analysed but which disappear and reappear *capriciously*. From the point of view of causality it is a world in which the connections between things are masked by the relations between the action and the desired results; hence the subject's activity is conceived as being the primary and almost the sole motive power.[2] (my italics)

There is an interestingly comprehensive anticipation of these ideas in Kafka's "Description of a Struggle," which demonstrates clearly how the unpredictable behaviour of mobile objects, mirrors and accentuates the latent fears of the self for its own stability. As Piaget infers, the existence of a stable spatial universe obeying the laws of cause and effect implies the possible existence of a stable self. In "Description of a Struggle" (hereafter cited as "Description") Kafka makes clear that where the former can no longer be taken for granted, the latter is similarly cast in doubt. That Kafka felt his own stability threatened seems clear from the many references made to having his feet on the ground, both in his fiction and elsewhere. For instance, in a letter to Max Brod and Felix Welsch (Meran, April 1920), he talks of the torments of saying goodbye to his old room, "which seemed the only secure ground under his feet,"[3] and, in an earlier letter, to the sister of Julie Wohryzek, then his fiancée (Prague, November 24, 1919), he talks, even at that stage of his life, of having to fight incessantly for his inner stability.[4] It is interesting that there is no evidence of spatial incoherence in the 'frame' story of "Description," which, in fact, has a very stable, euclidean quality. As Charles Osborne has noted, the story as a whole is a work of conscious artistry, a "chinese-box-like structure" in which the "nightmarish frenzy" of the central section is "set in a very real and familiar landscape,"[5] and what emerges from this central pandora's box is carefully orchestrated. If there is "consternation in the form," it is by no means totally out of control.[6]

In Kafka's apparently spatially incoherent universe, the protagonists are at first able to manipulate objects, like children, but they also learn to fear them and begin to endow them with powers of automatism and qualities of anthropomorphism. Either in accordance with the wishes of the protagonists, or their own, and as a result of their powers of motion these objects can effect changes of relative distance, size and speed and can change shape, losing their "lovely outline," so anticipating Kafka's later use of perceptual expansion and contraction of objects. Thus, as the main events of "Description" begin and the narrator and the acquaintance approach an "unfinished landscape," the narrator suddenly causes the mountainous road to become steeper and flatter at his will, and in his preoccupation with causing the rise of a high mountain, he forgets to let the moon rise. ("DS" p. 22/"B" pp. 28-29) Other protagonists, such as the supplicant and the fat man, have similar powers. The supplicant can put a stop to the "humming of the night" by raising his hand ("DS" p. 40/"B" p. 52) and the fat man, overwhelmed by the mountain, can command it to move so that he has room to breathe. ("DS" p. 26/"B" p. 34)

No one and nothing is safe in this unpredictable universe where objects suddenly become aggressive and terrifying and have the power of moving at great speed or even of disappearing altogether, and where the normal, fixed relationships between people and objects cannot be relied upon to remain constant. The supplicant, who feels particularly threatened by this unstable world, sees the spire of the town hall moving in circles and lamp-posts bending like bamboos ("DS" pp. 35-6/"B" p. 46) and has frightening visions of "menservants in daringly cut grey tailcoats," climbing tall poles in the dissolute court of France, "for they have to raise enormous gray linen sheets off the ground with thick ropes and spread them in the air, because the great lady has expressed the wish for a moisty morning." ("DS" p. 42/"B" pp. 53-4) When the objects become aggressive, all the protagonists suddenly become threatened with destruction. The moon over which the narrator previously had control assumes a "terrifying aspect" and "the road threatened to slip away" under his feet, prior to crumbling away altogether, while the river rises, drowning the fat man's bearers, as it will later drown him. ("DS" p. 46/"B" p. 59) The insecurity of the fat man and the supplicant is further increased by the belief that the actions of the already menacing object world are premeditated rather than accidental, and inspired by apparently human emotions such as vanity, vindictiveness and anger. The mountain is conceived of as vain, and in its desire to be looked at, intrudes on the fat man's thoughts but, since it has a "capricious fondness for the pulp of our brains," it has to be placated to keep it up at all. ("DS" p. 26/"B" pp. 33-4) The supplicant feels himself "assaulted" by the moon and stars as well as by the urban buildings. Only the narrator, in different mood, has "sense enough" to regard such things as inanimate.

These movements of the universe are followed by violent and continuous change, characterized by speed. The banks of the river stretch beyond all bounds and the fat man is drowned. ("DS" p. 46/"B" p. 59) Strange anomalies of distance and size enable the narrator to touch a distant metal signpost with the palm of his hand. Thinking he has grown small, he then realises it is his head which has shrunk, while his limbs have grown out of all proportion, so that he can no longer estimate his size:

> After all I was small, almost smaller than usual . . .
> Nevertheless I was mistaken, for my arms were as huge as the clouds of a steady country rain. . . . I don't know why they were trying to crush my poor head. It was no larger than an

> ant's egg, but slightly damaged and as a result
> no longer quite round . . .
>   But my legs, my impossible legs, lay over
> the wooded mountains . . . They grew and grew.
> They already reached into the space that no
> longer owned any landscape, for some time
> their length had gone beyond my field of vision.
>   But no, it isn't like that -- after all, I'm
> small for the time being -- I'm rolling -- I'm
> rolling.
>   Please passers-by, be so kind as to tell me
> how tall I am -- just measure these arms, these
> legs."
>
> ("DS" pp. 46-7/"B" pp. 59-60)

These changes which affect the physical self anticipate the imaginary and real changes of man into beetle in "Wedding," and "The Metamorphosis" respectively, and emphasize the strong connection made by Kafka, between the adequate, physical existence of the body and a stable, inner self. This perhaps, accounts for his concern that the self should have a recognizable place in the world, such as that sought by K. in The Castle, and denied, as has already been mentioned, to Karl in The Man, and, for different reasons, to Joseph K. in The Trial.

There is plenty of evidence in "Description," that for Kafka, the line between the concrete existence of the body and the belief in the reality of the self is very thin. The self of the supplicant, who is seen as having a body of tissue-paper which rustles, and whose body encloses the self so tentatively that it has no "clear outline" but 'dissolves' in the reflection of shop-windows, seeks a body, not only as proof of material existence, but of the existence of an inner self, stable enough to withstand the instability of objects. Furthermore, the self aspires to the degree of stability it imagines others have, such as those around it, for whom objects seem to remain constant:

> I hope to learn from you how things really are, why it is that around me things sink away like fallen snow, whereas for other people even a little liqueur glass stands on the table steady as a statue.
>
> ("DS" p. 34/"B" p. 44)

The 'assault' or movement of the sky and of the very buildings in the square, not only threaten the solidity and permanency of the supplicant's body, but also make inroads on the reality of his self:

> What is it that makes you all behave as though you were real? Are you trying to make me believe I'm unreal, standing here absurdly on the green pavement? You, sky, surely it's a long time since you've been real, and as for you, Ringplatz, you never have been real."
>
> ("DS" p. 40/"B" p. 52)

Similarly, even though the body may exist, it needs to be seen and confirmed as seen by others to maintain its existence, as was discussed earlier on. Fickert's edition of "Description" quotes the supplicant as saying, "There has never been a time . . . in which I was convinced, through the agency of my self, of my existence."[7] The fact of being seen to exist in itself confers value on the self. This is a theme which is implicit in much of Beckett, particularly in the plays and the later work. The narrator in "Description" hopes that to be seen by and to be seen with the acquaintance will give him worth for "Who knows, this man . . . might be capable of bestowing on me in the eyes of the world a value . . ." ("DS" p. 13/"B" p. 17) In response to the fat man's questioning, the supplicant too, confirms that he likes to be seen, "for me it's a need to let myself be nailed down with those eyes" ("DS" p. 33/"B" pp. 42-3), and he hopes that in the course of being noticed in church, he will become aware of having a body, for, "One fears a number of things -- that one's body could vanish -- that it might be a good idea to go to church and pray at the top of one's voice in order to be looked at and acquire a body." ("DS" p. 44/"B" p. 57) Edouard Raban in "Wedding" has a comparable need to be seen and valued, but it is not satisfied -- hence his feeling of alienation.

It is very noticeable that the protagonists in "Description" have no stability in themselves, but seem to change places and to vary in their individual responses to the mutinous objects. The acquaintance and the narrator are in fact doubles -- both are in love with the housemaid who wears a black velvet ribbon round her neck and both are engaged. Kurt Fickert supplies interesting evidence for concluding that in this story Kafka makes use of a complicated system of doubling, and notes the frequent appearance of doubles or multiple fragmentation of the self, indicating a self "desperately seeking cohesion."[8]

Naturally, the description of this spatial frenzy takes on a different significance when seen in relation to the story which 'frames' it. As Charles Osborne indicates, this refers to "the ostensible outer world of the narrator and his acquaintance", who are walking high on the Laurenziberg mountain outside Prague, 'discussing' and struggling with the problem of love -- a world to which the story finally returns. The work is a serious one; its "real purpose is to dredge up into the air a kind of blue-print for existence", continues Osborne. "Is love the guide? Or dependence? Or stability? How can one become stable? On whom can one depend?"[9] Emrich maintains that the "rendering asunder of brain and body" implied by the shrinking head and growing limbs of the narrator at the end, is an indication of the diminishing of the rational, calculating self.[10] According to both critics, the short episode, "Children on a Country Road",[11] which Osborne says was intended by Kafka to be placed at the end of the third section entitled "The Fat Man", is of key significance to the whole. These children, who live for the moment, as opposed to adults geared to the deadening, mechanical work-world, are "pressing forward out of time and space. 'We made a hole through the evening with our heads. There was neither daytime nor night-time.'"[12] At the back of Kafka's exploration into the spatial orientation of objects and the self seems to have been, amongst others, the question of whether it was possible to reject the empirical, phenomenological world of time and space, without endangering the essential self. Beckett confronts a similar problem.

> Il n'y a pas de Vrai! Il n'y
> a que des manières de voir.
>
> Flaubert[13]

In Kafka's subsequent works, while the fundamental existence of a stable, external space, in the sense described by Piaget, is never again seriously in doubt, the problem of the "breakdown in the object" is not abandoned, but approached in a different way -- through concern with the problem of perception.

Although the "architectonic form" of "Description" allows for the possibility of the story beginning and ending in a relatively stable, exterior world, it seems probable that Kafka felt it necessary to establish his subsequent works firmly in that world, if only to allow him to show how it could be 'destroyed' by perception. "Wedding

Preparations in the Country" (Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande, 1907-8), reflects an almost euclidean sense of urban space, not unlike that of the Prague streets, squares and quays of the 'frame' story of "Description," to which Osborne refers, and which Kafka promptly sets out to undermine, differently in the two works, through the objective and subjective perceptions of Edouard Raban and Karl Rossman respectively. By the time he writes "The Metamorphosis," an ordered, exterior world is sufficiently implied that it can almost be taken for granted. While "Wedding" emphasizes, though not exclusively, the possible effects of objective perception, "The Metamorphosis" is predominantly concerned with subjective perception. The Man, an apparently traditional novel of adventure, acts as a bridge between the two.

In "Wedding," Raban's perception of Prague, as he walks from his room to the station late on a wet afternoon, is affected above all by light and the reflection of light, in combination with movement -- the movement of people and mainly horse-drawn vehicles:

> He came to a domed arch at the top of the steep street, leading onto a small square all around which there were many shops, already lit up. In the middle of the square, somewhat obscured by the light around the edge, was a low monument, the seated meditative figure of a man. The people moved across the lights like narrow shutters, and since the puddles spread all the brilliance far and wide, the square seemed ceaselessly changing."
>
> ("WP" p. 56/"H" pp. 12-13)

Very aware of this fluctuating reality, Raban seemingly reports exactly what he sees of the incomplete, impressionistic world around him, even though he may only apprehend it in meaningless parts, quickly glimpsed. The movement of Raban himself naturally affects what he can see in a short time -- rather like the lens of a camera recording a moving object -- and what he can understand of the origin of the fragment he sees. Thus, as in an Impressionist painting, the destruction of the object, mainly by means of the flux of light and/or movement, is dispassionately recorded through careful, objective perception of what is actually seen, instant by instant, whether or not it happens to constitute a meaningful whole. More often than not, this results in a view of fragments of one object superimposed upon another:

> As soon as the carriage had passed Raban, some bar blocked the view of the near horse drawing the carriage; then some coachman -- wearing a big top hat -- on an unusually high box was moved across the front of the ladies -- this was now much further on --
>
> ("WP" p. 57/"H" pp. 13-14)

In passing, one should note the implied automatism here recalling "Description" which suggests that the coachman moves across the carriage passively controlled by an outside force.

In the train going to the country, Raban describes an impressionistic, fragmented view of people sitting in the carriage:

> He saw many people's backs, and the backs of their heads, and between them the upturned faces of people on the seat opposite. In some places smoke was curling from pipes and cigars, in one place drifting limply past the face of a girl.
>
> ("WP" p. 63/"H" pp. 21-2)

The fast movement of the train affects what Raban sees out of the window: "Villages come toward us and flash past, while at the same time they turn away into the depths of the country, where for us they must disappear" ("WP" p. 64/"H" p. 23) and objects are seemingly destroyed as he watches: "All unexpectedly the tall railings of a bridge outside the windows, were torn apart and pressed together, as it seemed." ("WP" p. 65/"H" p. 24).

Although these fragmented visual records are as objective as one could wish -- that is, one never suspects that Raban's private fears are substantially distorting what he sees -- Kafka still succeeds in conveying Raban's anxiety and self-doubt, mostly in ways that are not markedly spatial. This seems to be partially achieved by the pace of the description, which, on the empirical level, could be justified on the grounds that Raban is supposedly hurrying to the station, but, even more by the interior/exterior movement of Raban's thoughts, which fluctuate according to the attention given to the outer and inner world. The subjective perception of the world goes on mainly in Raban's thoughts and is cleverly threaded into his observations of the exterior world, depriving them of the total quality of cool, logical analysis they might otherwise have. Similarly, the meaninglessness of the fragmentary outside world that he perceives, cannot but be seen as, in part anyway, a reflection of the alienation of Raban's inner self discussed earlier in Chapter II. Just as there is a sense of strangeness about Raban's view of the coachman, seemingly pulled as if by some invisible hand across his view of the ladies in the carriage, so the people walking past him in "various rhythms" are described by him as if they were puppets on the end of a string:

> Two gentlemen were exchanging information. The one held his palms upward, raising and lowering them in regular motion, as though he were balancing a load . . . Now and then came men who were smoking, bearing small upright elongated clouds along ahead of them.
>
> ("WP" p. 52/"H" p. 7)

and in the road, in a passing dray, the driver has one leg stretched out and his foot nearly touches the ground, so that "It looked as though he were sitting in a field in fine weather." ("WP" p. 54/ "H" p. 9)

Similarly, as was seen in Chapter II, Raban feels alienated from the people around him. Both the lady who seems to look through him and the people, both present and absent, who invade his personal space, are seen by him as passively hostile and he responds in like manner, by resorting to a form of withdrawal, which gives the appearance of reality. Thus Raban's clothed body goes to the country to perform his social functions, and the real self remains behind. Whereas the desire to lie in bed day-dreaming of being a beetle represents a wish to withdraw from life, in "Metamorphosis," the insect that Gregor Samsa becomes represents his preoccupation with the exterior work-world, and a corresponding neglect of his inner self and its needs.

There are also several examples of physical disorientation and ambiguity denoting inner uncertainty in "Wedding," which are slight in themselves, but cumulatively significant. The lurching, "big-dipper-like" changes of perspective, which occur in The Man, are here anticipated in miniature and certain perceptual ambiguities, taken together with some in "Description," signal a fundamental questioning of the reliability of human perception as an instrument of knowledge, which Beckett embraces as a structural principle of his trilogy. Raban's inner disorientation is hinted at by the way in which his gaze is suddenly forced in another direction by someone or something unexpectedly barring his way. About to step into the street from the doorway, his way is blocked by several passing women so that he is forced to look down at the top of a little girl's hat, from close range: ". . . he looked down on a little girl's hat, which was made of plaited red straw and had a little green wreath on the wavy brim", ("WP" p. 55/"H" p. 10) and as he moves towards the tramcar stop, "Electric tramcars moved past, huge and very close." ("WP" p. 58/"H" p. 15) For Raban, uncertain space normally becomes the subject of close scrutiny and fascination. When the train draws out of the station on his arrival at the station, he is confronted with a massive landscape on the far side of the track, which takes his breath away:

> Was it a dark view through a gap or was it woods, was it a pool, or a house in which the people were already asleep, was it a church steeple or a ravine between the hills? Nobody must dare go there but who could restrain himself?
>
> ("WP" p. 67/"H" p. 27)

Yet when he sits down in the dark, empty omnibus, Raban lights a candle stub taken from his pocket and easily imagines himself in the security of a little room:

> It was bright enough, the darkness outside made it appear as though the omnibus had black distempered walls and no glass in the windows. There was no need to think that there were wheels under the floor and in front the horse between the shafts.
>
> ("WP" p. 69/"H" p. 29)

Curiously enough, there are occasions when the deceptions of perception hide a comforting reality! At times the supplicant in "Description" finds solace in this fact:

> And on a beautiful day hardly anyone can prevent us from saying: 'Oh God, today is a beautiful day,' for we are already established on this earth and live by virtue of an agreement.
>
> For we are like tree trunks in the snow. They lie there apparently flat on the ground and it looks as though one could push them away with a slight kick. But no, one can't, for they are firmly stuck to the ground. So you see even this is only apparent.
>
> ("DS" p. 45/"B" p. 58)

Although written later than "Wedding", the novel, The Man Who Was Lost Sight Of is a far more traditional work, as though, after the fluidity of the earlier works, Kafka wanted to create and maintain a fictional world of more solid, euclidean space. Not surprisingly, narrative interest takes precedence over the problem of perception in this novel, and where the latter does play a rôle, it tends to be in the form of subjective perception.

There are interesting, if superficial, similarities and differences between Karl Rossman's view of New York in The Man and Raban's view of Prague in "Wedding," but only in one important instance does Karl's objective perception of objects in space resemble Raban's fragmented impressions. Karl's view of New York, where he has newly arrived from Europe, is naturally partly conditioned by his youth and the newness and strangeness of his new-world surroundings. It is light and movement, however, as for Raban in Prague, that particularly affect his spatial perception, but in The Man, the added elements of great height and vast scale augment the visual confusion. Karl's view of the Statue of Liberty in sunshine, immediately followed by his bewildering descent below the deck of the ship, is one of many rapid changes of perspective that occur in the novel -- the view from his sixth-floor balcony, a unique example of objective perception, is another. Somewhat prophetic of the effect America will have on his own life, it gives Karl a dazzling, kaleidoscopic view of the violent, almost inhuman frenzy, in the street below:

> But what would have been at home the highest vantage point in the town allowed him here little more than a view of one street, which ran perfectly straight between two rows of squarely chopped buildings and therefore seemed to be fleeing into the distance, where the outlines of a cathedral loomed enormous in a dense haze. From morning to evening and far into the dreaming night that street was a channel for a constant stream of traffic which, seen from above, looked like an inextricable confusion, for ever newly improvised, of foreshortened human figures and the roofs of all kinds of vehicles, sending into the upper air another confusion, more riotous and complicated, of noises, dust and smells, all of it enveloped and penetrated by a flood of light which the multitudinous objects in the street scattered, carried off and again busily brought back, with an effect as palpable to the dazzled eyes as if a glass roof stretched over the street were being violently smashed into fragments at every moment.
>
> (*Man*, pp. 49-50/*Vsch*. pp. 48-9)

As Szanto points out, however, Kafka's narrator, speaking through the mouth of his protagonist, "cannot always be relied on to report what is, for the filter of his personality can distort his described picture."[14] Although the description may seem to be totally external, "The narrator's unconscious has ascribed values to environment, to images both of the external world and of psychological pictures (memories and possibilities); the result is not a description of the world, but a Rorschach test of the perceiving individual."[15] This is clearly true of the various instances of expansion and contraction of the object which occur in Kafka's work. Whereas the above description of spatial disintegration is an example of objective perception, in Kafka, subjective distortions of reality, indicating an emotional colouring of perception and implying unusual stress in the protagonist, often result in dilation of the object casting doubt on its constancy and relative size. The distortions of "Description" no doubt furnished Kafka with tried precedents for this type of fluctuating imagery.

Growth in height, though usually very limited in its application in any one work, is sufficiently common in Kafka's work to warrant mention. One thinks particularly of Kafka's short story, "The Judgement" (1912), in which Georg Bendemann's father suddenly towers above him, termed by Fickert an "El-Greco-like-distortion."[16] In The Man, it is Mr. Green, one of his uncle's business friends whom Karl fears and dislikes, who seems to grow before his eyes. On the occasion in question, Karl's first view of Green occurs as Karl and Mr. Pollunder, seemingly drawn together in a certain intimacy, arrive at the latter's house for an overnight stay. Neither seems very pleased at the unexpected arrival of Green and "the sight of Green's gigantic figure -- he had already got used to Mr. Pollunder's bulk -- which gradually loomed above them as they climbed the steps, dispelled all Karl's hopes of luring Mr. Pollunder away from the man that evening." (Man p. 69/ Vsch. p. 70) Karl later refers in his mind to Green as a great athlete, a captain of athletes," comparing the latter's figure to the rather unhealthy corpulence of Mr. Pollunder. This suggests a change in Karl's relative view of the two men and a less biased view of Green. At midnight, however, when Karl has an appointment with Green in the bewildering corridors of the unfinished wing of the house, the latter again takes on the proportions of a wicked giant in a fairy tale: "Green was standing quite close to Karl, who had to lean back against the wall. In this corridor Green took on an almost absurd size, and Karl wondered in jest if he could have eaten up good Mr. Pollunder." (Man p. 102/Vsch. p. 106)

The Hotel Occidental in the same novel, in which Karl works as a lift-boy until he is unfairly dismissed also seems to multiply in size, as reported incidentally by the third-person narrator in the course of the novel. Thus, when Karl first notices the façade of the hotel as he leaves the saloon with food and drink for his two companions, it has five floors, whereas, just before he leaves he is asked to fetch a doctor for a lady who has fainted on the seventh floor. Karl's room number is first given as 536, but the Head Waiter later refers, perhaps ironically, to five thousand guests. Karl himself talks of the "stupendous hierarchy" of the hotel, and just before he escapes from the head porter after his dismissal, the latter refers to the number of doors which he controls as if the building were enormous:

> Besides, as Head Porter I am in a sense placed over everyone, for I'm in charge of all the doors of the hotel, this main door, the three middle doors, not to mention innumerable little doors and doorless exits.
>
> (Man p. 212/Vsch. pp. 226-7)

This 'growth' in the hotel is also implied by the difference between the personal attention which Karl receives from the manageress at the beginning, and the impersonal, bureaucratic nature of his dismissal at the end, when the manageress herself is subject to the power of the head waiter and porter.

Although Kimberly Sparks refers to these expansions and contractions in space as "trick photography," he also makes the useful observation that, in Kafka's work, "The space and time of the victim always distort and stretch under the weight of authority."[17] Thus, although the Hotel Occidental seems to expand spatially in terms of Karl's subjective experience and perception, it also changes from a small, intimate hotel to a large, impersonal, bureaucratic organization. This view is supported by Emrich, who sees the latter as "characteristic of Kafka's poetic fantasy in which such intermediary systems mount into incalculability . . . Kafka's door-keepers and mediating authorities and channels that grow to colossal dimensions are the picture of an age in which complex systems of apparatus, incessantly and automatically increasing, wrest all decisions from the hands of individuals.[18] This is the frenzied background of the industrial and office world, in which office clerks become mere functionaries, losing their sense of self, and of which the most careful, dispassionate and objective perception can only render an accurate description of its processes, not endow it with meaning or significance. The individual himself, according to his subjective view, supplies meaning or discerns the lack of it; neither the object nor the individual have absolute value in themselves.

In "The Metamorphosis" Kafka explores the implications of the relativity of objects and of object to enclosed space in terms of subjective perception, in a more penetrating way than was possible in The Man. The man who is lost sight of in "The Metamorphosis" is far more radically lost than Karl in the early novel, or Raban, who imagines himself lying 'snug as a bug' in bed in "Wedding," At the end of "The Metamorphosis," the only reminders of Gregor in his former shape are the three identical lodgers -- an example of innovative doubling, according to Fickert[19] -- who could also be multiplied indefinitely as caricatures of the ubiquitous office clerk.

The initial metamorphosis of Gregor Samsa into a beetle has the character of the changes which took place in "Description." In The Trial, the physical self, when 'arrested,' does not change and the personal characteristics of Joseph K. only become evident very gradually and in a much less dramatic way than in the earlier story. When Gregor awakes as a "gigantic insect," he soon affirms his size by indications of his great breadth and length. The former is such that he cannot move in or out of the door of his room, even standing on end. The latter is implied by the fact that he can form no clear perception of the extent of the back half of his body. Apart from his sister's perception of his body as flat and thin at his death, all subsequent information concerning the insect's size is indirect and conveyed in relation to something else, such as the sofa or his father's enormous shoe-soles, for instance. The only other 'object' besides the insect for which more than one 'estimation' of size is given, is the bedroom which 'changes' its size several times according to the subjective perceptions of the insect as they in turn are mainly determined by the attitude of the family towards it.

The first major change in the insect's perception of the bedroom, which, on waking, it had seen as a "regular human bedroom, only rather too small," takes place at, or after twilight the first evening, following Gregor-as-insect's first sortie into the family rooms. Having lost his job and filled with an unusual apprehension, Gregor sees only a "lofty, empty room" and so seeks refuge in a space constructed on a more intimate scale -- a small space under the sofa, although it is not comfortable for his back and his body is too broad to be totally accommodated by it. ("M" pp. 106-7/"V" pp. 90-1)

By early morning of the next day, however, his much-loved sister has thoughtfully provided a greater choice of food and since his body is swollen with food he again comes out into the room. As time passes Gregor gains more control of his body, which implies acceptance of his condition. This is physically expressed in his nightly excursions up the walls and over the ceiling where he likes to hang. Even with the extra space that this makes available to him he finds the "few square yards of floor space" in his room rather restricting. By the time his sister begins to empty his room of furniture to give him more crawling space, the size of his room has 'changed' four times, fluctuating from normal to lofty, back to normal again and thence to too small. For the first and only time, a more objective indication of Gregor-as-insect's own size is provided. When spread out on the picture of the girl in the fur muff, which he originally cut from a magazine, Gregor covers it. In fact this is only a very approximate size estimation because Kafka does not indicate to what extent the insect overlaps the edges.

Gregor's second emergence from his room into the family apartment represents a decisive crisis point in the story. Attacked by his father with apples and dumbfounded at the enormous size of his father's shoe-soles above him, he realizes that his father is no longer a helpless invalid, but a well turned out, uniformed, working man. Gregor 'changes places' with him and becomes an invalid, taking "long minutes" to creep across his room. ("M" p. 122/"V" p. 110)

On the third and last occasion that the insect leaves his room, he goes to listen to his sister playing the violin. His room is now a filthy lumber-room housing unwanted furniture and garbage, but Gregor is almost indifferent to it. While Gregor-as-insect appreciates the music, the three lodgers, physical 'doubles' of his former self, ignore it. As Gregor crawls back to his room to die, after hearing that his sister and, by implication, his family, wish to get rid of him, the return journey to his room seems much longer than the outgoing one and, "He was amazed at the distance separating him from his room and could not understand how, in his weak state, he had managed to accomplish the same journey so recently, almost without remarking it." ("M" p. 135/"V" p. 124) This 'psychological' space, which results in horizontal extension, resembles the 'increased' distance of the doctor's return journey in "A Country Doctor" and the seemingly endless and unmeasurable space experienced by K. at the beginning of The Castle, to be discussed overleaf. Returning for a moment to the question of subjective perception in "The Metamorphosis," it is worth noting that within the confines of a short story, Kafka has emphasized the power of subjective perception to distort reality, questioned whether that reality exists and cast doubt on the extent to which perception can be relied on to supply accurate knowledge of the world.

Strictly speaking, the 'lengthening' of horizontal space as evidenced towards the end of "The Metamorphosis," is not an indication of the "breakdown of the object," but it is so obviously part of the problem of subjective perception and instability in space that it seems reasonable to mention it here. As already indicated, the spatial 'extension' which takes place in "A Country Doctor" is very similar to that in "The Metamorphosis." Whereas, on the outgoing journey, the doctor's magnificent "unearthly" horses carry him to a patient ten miles away, seemingly in an instant, when he wishes to return home to carry on his normal life, the horses refuse to hurry and only crawl like old men, through "snowy wastes," which are never-ending. Like the insect in "The Metamorphosis," the doctor cannot understand the discrepancy between the two journeys. In The Castle, however, the spatial extension is somewhat different because, although K. sets out to reach the Castle from the village, he never succeeds in getting beyond the village and thus never empirically experiences the outward journey in its entirety. K. estimates the distance to the Castle according to his visual perception of its apparent distance from the outskirts of the village, but his estimate seems to have been distorted by the strength of his desire to visit the Castle, and bears no relation to the real distance as K. begins to experience it. The "snowy wastes" between the village and the Castle seem to constitute a region to which K. cannot penetrate, at least in life. The country doctor has no choice but to wander interminably without ever reaching home, but K., cold and lonely, is forced into the steaming life of the peasants' cottage, so that, of the three, only Gregor actually experiences the apparent difference in length between the outward and return journeys.

It seems obvious that Gregor's journey back is long, not because of any empirical difference in the length of the two journeys, but because of the long time it seems to take him to make the return journey, during which he presumably has to come to terms with his sister's rejection of him and his imminent death. Kimberly Sparks refers to this type of space/time equation in Kafka's work:

> Only when the spatial metaphor begins to evolve and vary itself does time become an issue. But it is a strange kind of time; it is not expressed in terms of causal logic, but rather in terms of a logic of association, the logic of the spontaneous succession of spaces.[20]

Unfortunately, this also suggests a succession of little, joined segments of space thus losing the beauty and force of a Proustian-type 'durée' extending through space rather than through time. Expansions and contractions of time and space are characteristic of Kafka's "poetic fantasy" and take place, in Emrich's words, "according to the human reality which encompasses them.[21] Kafka had his own explanation for seemingly inexplicable spatial expansions. On a postcard to a young friend, Mitze Eisner (Meran, April 1920), Kafka himself wrote "(the head measures differently from the feet) [22]

K.'s several views of the Castle at the beginning of the novel of that name result in what seems to be a combined contraction of height, size and horizontal extension. This could be interpreted as the result of successive views each giving a more 'accurate' report of the Castle's appearance and gradually offsetting K.'s pre-disposition to see what he is hoping to see, rather than what is there: "On the whole this distant prospect of the Castle satisfied K.'s expectations." (C p. 15/S p. 17) Gradually, however, K.'s subjective perception of the Castle is replaced by more objective perception so that the Castle begins to be seen for the broken down, fragmented building it really is. Noticeably, K.'s first view of it is of a clearly defined building, "its outline made still more definite by the moulding of snow covering it in a thin layer." (C p. 15/S p. 17) Kafka does not indicate how K. comes to have these successive perceptions of the Castle; it is perhaps not intended to be clear. It rather seems as if K.'s expectations change as he looks and that therefore his perception of what he sees changes too:

> It was neither an old stronghold nor a mansion, but a rambling pile consisting of innumerable small buildings closely packed together and of one or two storeys; *if K. had not known that it was a castle he might have taken it for a little town*. There was only one tower as far as he could see, whether it belonged to a dwelling-house or a church he could not determine.
> (my italics)

On getting close, "he was disappointed in the Castle; it was after all only a wretched-looking town, a huddle of village houses." (C p. 15/S p. 17) K. compares the tower to the church tower of his home town with its tapering point indicating "a clearer meaning than the muddle of everyday life." The tower of the Castle, on the contrary, does not point away from the latter, but seems to celebrate it:

> The tower above him here was uniformly round, part of it graciously mantled with ivy, pierced by small windows that glittered in the sun, a somewhat maniacal glitter, and topped by what looked like an attic, with battlements that were

> irregular, broken, fumbling, as if designed by
> the trembling or careless hand of a child.
>
> (C pp. 15-6/S p. 18)

Kafka seems after all to be saying that objective perception, combined with a lack of pre-determined expectation, is the closest we can hope to come to reality and that the perceptions and consciousness of a child, or of someone living a life free of calculation and deliberate planning who is not part of the work-world, is more likely to see in an unprejudiced way. K.'s view of the Castle as old and tumble-down, possibly designed by a child, recalls Kafka's attitude to old and useless things mentioned by Emrich. (See p. 46 of this study) Kafka's celebration of the creative potential of 'childlikeness,' and the non-rational is also suggested in the multiple image of expansion and contraction towards the end of "Description," in which the narrator's thinking and perceiving organs, his head and eyes, as Emrich has pointed out, grow small. Such images of dynamic space are an important aspect of Kafka's modernity as a writer.

There are many similarities to Kafka in Beckett's conception of perceptual instability in space -- the term "breakdown of the object," which Beckett saw as the inevitable result of changes in perception, was used by him in 1934.[23] Kafka's work, perhaps, provides more easily identifiable and specific examples of the various ways in which perception can destroy the object, but, taken together, Beckett's novels and short prose pieces from the time of Watt (1953) onwards, testify to the progressive disintegration of the objective world and of the consciousness of the self. Whereas in Kafka's work, it is usually quite easy to distinguish between objective and subjective perception, this becomes increasingly difficult in Beckett due to his deliberate blurring of the distinction.

There is evidence of this in Molloy, the first novel of the trilogy, in the variations between Molloy's and Moran's descriptions of the same places, or what appear to be the same places. Where Molloy talks vaguely of his "vast region," which includes hills, plains and the sea (including the depths of the sea), without naming or categorizing it in any way, Moran, "late creature of his house . . . reining back his thoughts within the limits of the calculable," names Molloy's region as Bally, its surrounding land as Ballyba and reports it as having exact dimensions, representing, "with its dependent lands, a surface area of five or six square miles at the most." (Molloy, p. 133) At first, except for the mockery implied in the names, Moran's descriptions are impressive, but on closer inspection they contain less certainty than at first thought. For instance, as Moran continues his description of Bally, like K.'s successive views of the Castle, it becomes less and less precise: "it was dignified by some with the name of market-town by others regarded as no more than a village." (Molloy, p. 133) Still greater doubt is cast on the exact nature of the "swamp" or beautiful "kind of strangled creek", which reputedly divides Bally from the sea. While Molloy says of the former, "For between my town and the sea there was a kind of swamp . . . a stinking steaming swamp in which an incalculable number of human lives were yearly engulfed." (Molloy, p. 76) Moran later refers to the creek as "the principal beauty of this region" of whose wet sands some thought there was nothing more beautiful, while others "held it was an underground lake. But all were agreed . . . that their town was on the sea." (Molloy, p. 134)

In these early stages of the trilogy, however, there are still occasions when it is quite clear whether perception is objective or subjective. Examples of the former are Molloy's successive views of "A or C" and his description of the moon seen through his window at Lousse's house. These are obvious attempts to describe exactly what is seen in successive moments, rather like Cézanne's "multiple outlining," which, as Merleau-Ponty said, do not indicate the latter's lack of finish, but that "he is continuously experiencing the world."[24]

In Molloy's unsure description of "A or C," it seems one of them was bare-headed, wore sand shoes and smoked a cigar. "But was not perhaps in reality the cigar a cutty, and were not the sand-shoes boots, hobnailed, dust-whitened . . ." "And I am perhaps confusing several different occasions, and different times . . . And perhaps it was A one day at one place, then C another at another . . ." (Molloy, pp. 12 and 14)

Such descriptions not only testify to careful, objective perception; they undermine it at the same time by showing that, like memory, it cannot be trusted to transmit accurate information about the nature of the world. Beckett makes the additional point noted earlier that, since Molloy, like Malone and the Unnamable after him, is writing fiction, writing the story of his life after the event, fiction, and by implication, all language, is as culpable as memory and perception. As Solomon says, "language . . . is a mirror of the phenomenal world.[25]

While a prisoner in Lousse's house, Molloy observes the movement of the moon in relation to his window and tries to describe it, not as he 'knows' the situation to be, but as it appears. One aspect of this description is the illusion of automatism which it ascribes to the room and its walls. Molloy's window has two bars dividing it into three segments, the middle one of which remains constant. As the moon moves across the window from left to right,

> little by little the right gained what the left lost. For the moon was moving from left to right, or the room was moving from right to left, or both together perhaps, or both were moving from left to right, but the room not so fast as the moon, or from right to left, but the moon not so fast as the room. But can one speak of right and left in such circumstances? . . . yet what a simple thing it seemed, that vast yellow light sailing slowly behind my bars and which little by little the dense wall devoured and finally eclipsed.
>
> (Molloy, p. 39)

Later, having described the clothes of Lousse's oriental servant unusually accurately, Molloy realizes that the moon can never be so described: "Whereas the moon, I saw the room but darkly, at each fresh inspection it seemed changed." (Molloy, p. 44)

The disintegration of the conscious self is particularly obvious in the disorientation in space experienced by all the characters of the trilogy, who from Molloy to Malone and thence to the Unnamable, appear to be the same person, but at different stages of life. Molloy begins with Molloy in his mother's room: "I don't know how I got there. Perhaps in an ambulance, certainly a vehicle of some kind." (Molloy, p. 7) Malone in a very similar situation uses almost identical words: "This is just a plain private room apparently, in what appears to be a plain ordinary house. I do not remember how I got here. In an ambulance perhaps, a vehicle of some kind certainly." (Malone Dies, p. 183) The

Unnamable is totally disorientated both as self and in space as indicated by his first three questions: "Where now? Who now? When now?"

The expansions and contractions of his body and room experienced by Malone in bed are the subjective perceptions of a near-dying man who flits in and out of consciousness and feels his body, like the insect in "The Metamorphosis," as something unfamiliar and not part of him. The process begins in Molloy, where Molloy is lying in bed:

> And when I see my hands, on the sheet . . . they are not mine, I have no arms, they are a couple, they play with the sheet . . . But my feet are not like my hands, I do not bring them back to me, when they become my feet again, for I cannot, but they stay there, far from me, but not so far as before.
>
> (Molloy, p. 66)

Recalling Proust's image of old people taking up as much space in the universe as their age would indicate, "like giants plunged in the years," Malone's feet seem an enormous distance from him and he feels he would stretch to Australia if he stood up:

> But this sensation of dilation is hard to resist. All straine towards the nearest deeps and notably my feet . . . strange, I don't feel my feet any more . . . And yet I feel they are beyond the range of the most powerful telescope . . . And if I were to stand up again . . . I fancy I would fill a considerable part of the universe.
>
> (Malone Dies, pp. 234 and 235)

As Solomon has indicated, the small rooms in which Molloy and Malone lie, serve as metaphors for the diminishing self, for, in Beckett, the self is increasingly thought of as progressing towards spacelessness.

Both Molloy and Malone wish to become specks in the void as the Unnamable finally does. Thus, when Malone thinks he is shrinking into the space of a skull this represents a stage beyond the space of the bedroom:

> And softly my little space begins to throb again. You may say it is all in my head, and indeed sometimes it seems to me I am in a head and that these eight, no, six, these six planes that enclose me are of solid bone . . . . A kind of air circulates . . . and when all goes still I hear it beating against the walls and being beaten back by them. And then somewhere in midspace other waves, other onslaughts, gather and break . . ."
>
> (Malone Dies, p. 221)

9— Malone sees his death throes in terms of expansion and contraction, as already indicated in the image of the 'wombtomb,' because he sees his death in space as a birth into spacelessness and the life of the mind. As Solomon observes, the event is really already over and being described in fiction so that at the time of writing Malone is already spaceless; he is, "an idea, so to speak, in someone's head.":

> I am swelling . . . the ceiling rises and falls, rhythmically as when I was a foetus . . . I am being given . . . birth into death, such is my impression. The feet are clear already of the great cunt of existence. My head will be the last to die. Haul in your hands. I can't . . .
>
> (Malone Dies, p. 283)

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n
>
> Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I, 254

When Beckett wrote of the need for the "breakdown of the object," in his early article, "Recent Irish Poetry," he added, "The artist who is aware of this may state the space that intervenes between him and the world of objects . . . He may even record his findings, if he is a man of great personal courage."[26] Beckett has done the latter, through the 'persona' or voice of the Unnamable, the last in "a lengthy series of literary 'doubles' that cycle, walk, hobble, crawl, sit and lie motionless through Beckett's pages . . . doubles because their function is to reveal the self."[27]

What Beckett is courageous enough to reveal in *The Unnamable* is that the total withdrawal into the mind, so joyfully and hopefully undertaken in *Murphy* and the subsequent works, has not revealed the true self, but has made its very existence impossible. As Ross Chambers says, "the escape from time and space has been effected, but at the cost of annihilation."[28] Eugene Webb saw this novel as a "vision of chaos," a novel "losing its grasp on form,"[29] and Beckett himself realized that with the loss of any spatial extension subject/object differentiation was lost. As he said to Israel Shenker, in the interview already referred to (May 6, 1956), "There's no way to go on."[30] Beckett had realized, like Kafka, that the self cannot exist in a non-spatial context. Ross Chambers notes that when the Unnamable asks, 'Where now? Who now? When now?':

> In the annihilation of the where and the when, a who has survived to ask questions about itself: there is then some consciousness existing outside of space and time. But as soon as it asks questions about itself, it restores the where and the when: it cannot conceive itself except in space and time . . . that is, there is no way of isolating the timeless, spaceless consciousness from its temporal and spatial object, there is nowhere to place the walls of the cell.[31]

Thus, totally disorientated, without a past or a future and using words to describe his situation in space similar to those of Hamm in Endgame, the Unnamable tries desperately to locate himself in the purgatorial space he occupies -- it could be a head, or a skull, but he does not know:

> But, as I have said, the place may well be vast, as it may well measure twelve feet in diameter . . . I like to think I occupy the centre, but nothing is less certain. In a sense I would be better off at the circumference . . . From centre to circumference in any case it is a far cry and I may well be situated somewhere between the two. It is equally possible . . . that I too am in perpetual motion, accompanied by Malone, as the earth by its moon . . . All is possible, or almost. But the best is to think of myself as fixed and at the centre of this place, whatever its shape and extent may be.
>
> (The Unnamable, p. 295)

Unable to decide what substance surrounds him, whether air, water or land and whether it has any limit, the Unnamable realizes not only that he is in the void, but also that he has invented his fictions -- his doubles -- to escape from himself and to convince himself that he was doing something and going somewhere. It is when he tries to be himself that he discovers the difficulty of being oneself without spatial extension in a body, and without particular personal feelings and a language of self. Lacking these essentials he finds himself again tempted to create fictions like that of Mahood in his jar, who, like the supplicant and his doubles in "Description," does not know where he ends and needs to be seen to know that he exists and has existed in the past. (The Unnamable, pp. 342-45)

As he disintegrates further, the Unnamable's fears are reflected in short, almost panting sentences, already less structured and ponderous than those quoted overleaf:

> Help, help, if I could only describe this place, I who am so good at describing places . . . if I could put myself in a room, that would be the end of this wordy-gurdy . . . I could be motionless and fixed. I'd find a way to explore it, I'd listen to the echo, I'd get to know it . . . I'd be home . . . if I could describe this place . . . I've tried, I feel no place, no place around me, there's no end to me, I don't know what it is, it isn't flesh, it doesn't end, it's like air . . . a roof is not indispensible . . . I'm locked up, I'm in something . . . make a place, a little world, it will be round, this time it will be round . . . try and find out what it's like . . . there won't be windows, we're done with windows, the sea refused me, the sky didn't see me, I wasn't there . . . we must have walls, I need walls, good and thick, I need a prison, I was right, for me alone, I'll go there now . . .
>
> (The Unnamable, pp. 399-410)

Even in "Description," where the supplicant patently feels he has no body and in "Wedding" where Raban feels himself looked through and his personal space invaded, the language remains structured and in "The Metamorphosis," during his very last hours of life, Gregor-as-insect uses relative clauses to reflect on his condition.

It is a shock for the Unnamable, and one suspects for Beckett, to realize fully that the true self is not even revealed through words and language, for not only do they invariably tend towards fiction, but they also, like time and space, constitute another form of determinism. Says the Unnamable, "I am walled round with their vociferations, none will ever know what I am . . . I have no language but theirs . . . (The Unnamable, p. 325) As Solomon indicates, the fact that words describe a space-bound world and that there are no words to describe a self without limits, is one of the crucial problems of the trilogy.[32] "To the alienness of language corresponds the alienness of all reality." says Jean-Jacques Mayoux. "The inner man hearing the outer speak 'the words of others' has a sense as if of demonic possession . . ." -- "'Je est un autre,' as with Rimbaud, an alien speaks."[33]

It has been shown that perception, in Beckett's view, is unreliable and that memory and language further blurr the original impression. Given his belief that the self is never constant and his view of the total unimportance of the material world of physical phenomena, it could not be otherwise. It cannot truly be said, in Beckett's case, that the search for the self leads to the destruction of empirical reality because Beckett has already destroyed or at least neglected this world. Rather it is true to say that the search for the self in purely spaceless realms leads both to the destruction of self, mind and body, and to the total negation of any reality except that of the protagonist's subjective perception.

In Kafka's work, particularly in "Wedding" and The Man and of course in "Description," on the contrary, one finds a very careful description of exterior reality whether objectively or subjectively perceived. Yet the self remains in the prison of subjective perception for it seems nothing can convince it that it has legitimate physical existence or that it is part of the external world. One might say that empirical reality exists in spite of the Kafka self.

Notes to Chapter Three

[1] Louis Forestier, ed., Préparateurs des Faits Futurs, Lettres Modernes (Paris: Minard, 1975), p. 71.

[2] Piaget, The Child's Construction of Reality, pp. 3-4.

[3] Franz Kafka, Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors, eds. Beverly Colman, Nahum N. Glatzer, Christopher J. Kuppig and Wolfgang Sauerlander, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), p. 232. All further references to this work in English will be to the above edition.

Franz Kafka, Briefe (1902-1924), hrsg. Max Brod (New York: Schocken Books, 1958), p. 269. All further references to this work in German will be to the above edition.

[4] Kafka, Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors, p. 218/ Briefe, pp. 255-56. This fragment does not contain the necessary quotation.

[5] Charles Osborne, Kafka (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 33.

[6] Israel Shenker, "Moody Man of Letters," p. 1. In this interview Beckett talks briefly of Kafka, and referring to Kafka's form, he says: "It seems to be threatened all the time -- but the consternation is in the form. In my work there is consternation behind the form, not in the form."

[7] Kurt J. Fickert, Kafka's Doubles, Utah Studies in Literature and Linguistics (Berne, Francfort/M (sic), Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1979), p. 27 and p. 45.

[8] Fickert, p. 36.

[9] Osborne, p. 34.

[10] Emrich, p. 98.

[11] Franz Kafka, "Children on a Country Road," in Franz Kafka: The Complete Works, pp. 379-82.

Franz Kafka, "Kinder auf dem landstrasse," in Erzählungen und Klein Prosa, pp. 27-30.

[12] Emrich, pp. 111-12.

[13] R. J. Sherrington, Three Novels by Flaubert: A Study of Techniques (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 337.

[14] Szanto, p. 6.

[15] Szanto, p. 8.

[16] Fickert, p. 32.

[17] Sparks, p. 126.

[18] Emrich, p. 290.

[19] Fichert, p. 49.

[20] Sparks, p. 124.

[21] Wilhelm Emrich, The Literary Revolution and Modern Society and Other Essays, trans. Alexander and Elizabeth Henderson (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1971), p. 44.

[22] Kafka, Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors, p. 234/ Briefe, p. 271.

[23] Andrew Belis, pseud. Samuel Beckett, "Recent Irish Poetry," The Bookman, 86 (August 1934), 235.

[24] Richard Shiff, "Seeing Cézanne," Critical Inquiry, 4 (Summer 1978), p. 808.

[25] Solomon, p. 146.

[26] Beckett (pseud. Andrew Belis), "Recent Irish Poetry," p. 235.

[27] Chambers, p. 451.

[28] Chambers, p. 458.

[29] Eugene Webb, Samuel Beckett: A Study of his Novels (Seattle and London: Univ. of Washington Press, "n.d."), p. 168.

[30] Israel Shenker, p. 3.

[31] Chambers, pp. 458-59.

[32] Solomon, p. 31.

[33] Jean-Jacques Mayoux, p. 24.

CONCLUSION

> Les relations entre les choses ou entre les
> aspects des choses est toujours médiatisées
> par notre corps . . .
>
> Merleau-Ponty[1]

> The mind perceives; we grasp space through our
> bodily situation.
>
> Szanto[2]

The space/self aspect of Kafka's and Beckett's works is perahaps best understood when seen in relation to the concerns of Kafka and Beckett as writers in an industrial society, who have experienced the doubts and anxieties attendant on an existential awareness of separation from their environment.[3] As novelists still writing in the established tradition of the novel, Kafka and Beckett substantially adapt its techniques for their own artistic purposes. Thus, the metaphor for the journey in search of self becomes an unsuccessful, interiorized quest and the omniscient author is replaced by the strictly limited point of view of an often hesitant narrator-self.[4] Above all, while, in more traditional works of fiction, the self functioned in a spatial setting of familiar and clearly delimited empirical reality, and was defined in relation to God and to other selves with whom it had recognizable affinities, the reverse is true of Kafka's and Beckett's works. In the latter, as intimated by the reduced space it occupies, the self tends to withdraw from outer to inner reality seeking refuge from uncertainty, and, particularly in Beckett, becomes almost exclusively concerned with establishing and maintaining its own identity without reference to others.[5] This withdrawal, which is indicative of the isolation, alienation, insecurity and perceptual doubts characteristic of Kafka's and Beckett's protagonists, in contrast to the more optimistic portrayals of other writers, is reflected in the spatial imagery of both authors. Whether that of the small urban room, the bedroom, the padded cell, the space of the mind, or the fluctuating space of subjective perception, the very existence of this imagery -- essentially constituting a graphic, structural means whereby the progressive, spiritual reduction of the self can be followed[6] -- testifies to its significance.

While Beckett's protagonists, increasingly withdrawn into the space of the mind, constantly seek to deny their connections with the phenomenal world of exterior reality, Kafka's heroes unavailingly try to feel themselves part of it. For both writers, the empirical world, often denoted by euclidean or topological spatial description, is the province of the 'Other'; it also acts as a foil for other more poetic or metaphoric uses of space. This is not to say that refuge in the inner world successfully replaces life in the external world. On the contrary, the Kafka/Beckett protagonist's chosen refuges nearly always prove illusory; wherever he is, the self is a potential victim, either of his own failures and illusions, or of the non-self, the 'Other.' Beckett's attempt to dispense with the exterior, material world altogether, by positing the mind as the exclusive locus of the essential self, is a conspicuous failure. As Hoffman, and Merleau-Ponty, point out, the body mediates between oneself and the object world.[7] Not only does the body act as a necessary boundary for the self, without which all subject/

object differentiation is lost; it is also an essential component of the self's identity. Thus, the Unnamable, in search of his true self in the spacelessness of the mind, soon discovers that the image of the 'wombtomb' fulfils only half its promise, for, as Kafka showed in "Description of a Struggle," the self cannot exist without a spatial dimension. Indeed, in the above-named works particularly, both Kafka and Beckett demonstrate that "Space is pre-eminent and essential to selfhood."[8]

Although the protagonists of both authors react to doubt and uncertainty in their environment by seeking security in small, dimly lit spaces, whether literal or metaphorical, there remains a certain ambiguity in their attitudes to inner/outer reality. Beckett's characters, for instance, rebel against the limits of determinism, particularly those of time and language. Murphy's own views are reflected in his perception that "The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new," (Murphy, p. 1) and the Unnamable, almost freed from the limitations of space, unexpectedly finds himself a prisoner of language. A similar ambiguity exists in the Beckett's protagonist's liking for vast, featureless landscapes, which, in some senses, he also fears, just as Malone seems to fear the onset of his long-sought spacelessness. The alienation experienced in the exterior, urban environment by Kafka's heroes likewise has an ambivalent quality, for, as noted earlier, the latter also seek to define themselves in relation to the 'Other.' Jaffe nevertheless believes the condition of alienation to be fundamental to Kafka's view of life, seeing in his work the very "anatomy of the outsider."[9] The extraordinary spatial images of the self as insect in "Wedding Preparations in the Country" and "The Metamorphosis" tend to support this view.

In the works discussed in this study, perhaps nothing is more characteristic of Kafka and Beckett than the sensation of fluctuation and movement in space, which they manage to convey. By definition, it is an image of inconstancy and uncertainty that affects the self no less than other objects in the same spatial field. The self cannot be identified in one static moment, since it changes from one moment to the next and is affected by time, experience and perception:

> There is no escape from the hours and the days. Neither from tomorrow or yesterday. There is no escape from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us, or been deformed by us . . . We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday.[10]

Beckett's concern with the "breakdown of the object" is largely based on the inconstancy of the self, the fluctuating nature of all perception, and a particular awareness of the distortions of subjective perception, all of which imply that the only reality we can know is that conveyed through our own consciousness.

As Weisgerber has pointed out, while space in the novel "n'existe qu'en vertu du langage," the contemporary novel, in common with the plastic arts, is equally capable of reflecting the discontinuity and fluctuation of space and movement, characteristic of the age.[11] By contrast with the static fictional space of which Durozoi wrote, in which the self was at one with its environment, the fluctuating space of Kafka's "Description of a Struggle" and Beckett's The Unnamable, reflects the existence of a self without stability or certainty of its position in space, a self at the mercy of subjective perception. The work of Kafka and Beckett attempts to mirror the instability of modern society. The reader of such a work, as Weisgerber suggests, "démunis des assurances qu'offrait un cadre de référence simple et stable . . . assiste à d'étranges expansions et contractions . . ."[12] "L'espace romanesque n'est-il pas, littéralement, une projection du narrateur?"[13] asks Weisgerber.

Notes to the Conclusion

[1] Jean Weisgerber, "Notes sur la Représentation de l'Espace dans le Roman Contemporain," Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles, Nos 2-3, 1971, p. 152.

[2] Szanto, p. 12.

[3] Szanto, pp. 3-4.

[4] Hoffman, p. 60. (Szanto, p. 6)

[5] Hoffman, p. 61.

[6] Hoffman, p. 46.

[7] Hoffman, p. 50.

[8] Hoffman, p. 50.

[9] Adrian Jaffe, The Process of Kafka's Trial, [East Lansing]: (Michigan State University Press, 1967), p. 71.

[10] Beckett, Proust, p. 13.

[11] Weisgerber, pp. 150 and 165.

[12] Weisgerber, pp. 165 and 160.

[13] Weisgerber, p. 160.

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